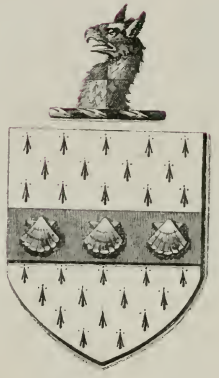

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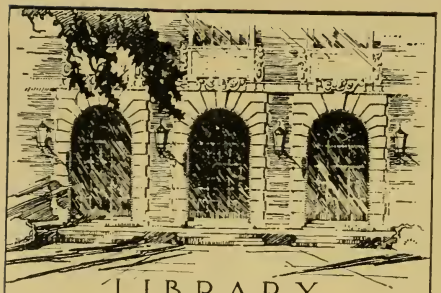

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MIRIAM SEDLEY;

OR,

THE TARES AND THE WHEAT.

A TALE OF REAL LIFE.

BY

LADY BULWER LYTTON.

Heart—Affluence in discursive talk,
From household fountains never dry;
The critic clearness of an eye,
That saw thro' all the Muses' walk;
* * * * * *
And Manhood fused with female grace,
In such a sort the child would twine
A trustful hand, unasked with thine,
And find its comfort in thy face.

ALFRED TENNYSON'S *In Memoriam.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
W. SHOBERL, PUBLISHER,
20, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1851.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

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MIRIAM SEDLEY.

CHAPTER I.

I AM sorry to say that Helen and Jessy both caught feverish and severe colds, while I escaped with a very slight one, which only kept me a couple of days in bed: but as I knew, by sad experience, that the nursing of Concave House consisted in asking a string of fretting and frivolous questions, whether one was able to answer them or not, leaving one for hours, if parched with fever, without a single beverage—and then one of the teachers gliding in, and asking in that charming, cool, apathetic voice, if you had not had some barley-water? with a codicil of "Dear me! I'm surprised at that, as I took the trouble of myself telling Jemima to *tell cook* to send some up;" and when it did come up, oh! the ineffable mess of muddy-looking,

smoked gruel that they called barley-water! I defy a hypocondriacal alligator, used to the slime of the Nile since its shell, to have swallowed it. How few persons are fit to be in a sick room! and what an oversight in education it is, as illness being no respecter of persons, must at one time or other come within every body's sphere; but between the intense ignorance of people not knowing how to do anything, and making a fuss about everything they do do, a poor sufferer is often more tortured by their attendants, than by their malady.

To be of use in an invalid's room, a person should be a sort of deputy Providence, knowing their necessities before they ask, and, above all, doing their spiriting gently: when glasses and spoons are used, they should be instantly, but quietly washed, and left ready for the next time; for nothing fevers and fusses a sick person so much as calling for this, and sending for that, and having to wait for everything; and allowing litter and disorder to accumulate about their room, makes them feel ten times more helplessly depressed. Whatever they are allowed to take, should be brought to them, without worrying them by asking them if they would like it. People, when they are ill, hate to be teased with questions; but they equally dislike being left alone, or having persons fidgetting in and out. If they cannot give up their time, at least for an hour or two consecutively, they should keep away from a sick room.

I have seen people, if indeed they could bring themselves to handle a leech, go tut-tut-ing and how tiresoming, all the time, if the leech, like a bad book, would not take, till the poor patient was fairly harassed into an additional degree of fever by these vituperations against the leeches, which might all with justice have been thought, but should not have been expressed.

I remember once having caught a severe cold, and writhing under a maddening paroxysm of tooth-ache; a lady who came to see me, thinking, of course, that I must be deaf, because I had a lambswool Malibran over my cap, by way of making herself agreeable, began talking at the top of her voice; and when I did not answer her, screamed out:

"Do you hear me? Shall I speak louder?"

"Oh! for Heaven's sake, don't!" groaned I, at length removing the handkerchief from my mouth. "I am in such agony, I cannot answer you."

Shortly after, I pointed to a decanter of barley-water by the bed-side, for her to pour me out some.

"Eh! what is it you want? Is it your Prayer-book?"

I shook my head in negation.

"Pray, tell me what it is? for how can I know, if you don't?"

Still I was in such pain, that speaking was an additional torture, that I would not voluntarily encounter. My hand was on the bell-rope, to ring for my maid,

when I recollected that she was "*having a cup of tea;*" for the intelligent reader, whether male or female, must be fully aware, that maids, and more especially lady's maids, are always *having a cup of tea* when they are wanted; and, as I hate disturbing servants, even at their tea-drinkings, I leant over, and touched the decanter of barley-water, to show that it was that that I wanted.

"Now, tell me," said this charming woman, whose tenderness could only be equalled by her tact, "how much I am to pour you out, as I know you have a great objection to a full cup of tea, or glass of wine; and perhaps it is the same with other things."

Never did a woman so richly deserve to be thrown out of the window; but at the time I had not the strength to render this little service to society; and when I recovered, my philanthropic ardour had subsided; that is, the inclination had passed away.

When people are really ill, those who come into the room should put list-shoes over their others, for in illness the nerves are always in a high state of excitement, and the sense of hearing is painfully acute. I remember a poor girl once in a rheumatic fever, who was maddened twenty times a-day, by being put to the question; which is quite as great a torture in a sick-room as it used to be in the Inquisition. Every time a coal fell out of the fire, the noise was like a dagger going through the poor sufferer's head; and yet her mother had the ignorance and the cruelty to scold her,

and tell her it was very ungrateful of her to be so irritable, when everything was done for her that could be done, and she had four physicians.

I knew that it was the irritability of pain, not temper; but those who have never suffered in mind or body, know nothing, and feel nothing. So I began to turn in my mind how the coals could be kept quiet —for it was a burning shame to add to the poor girl's sufferings—and I at length hit upon this expedient, which I recommend for all sick-rooms. I sent for a brazier, who was made to take off his shoes, and come quietly into the room; and then he took the measure of the hearth, and in a few hours made a sort of false hearth, as it were, of block-tin, about seven inches deep, which fitted in under the grate: this I had filled with sand, so that the coals fell noiselessly into this soft bed; and moreover, of a morning, instead of scraping, and raking, and rattling, for ever so long, the housemaid had nothing to do but to draw it quietly out, have it emptied, again filled with sand, and then replaced; when there was a clean hearth, without any noise.

"Well," said the young lady's mother, "I never should have thought of such a thing! *How did you do it?*"

"*By thinking,*" said I.

How different from a dear friend of mine, who is a perfect fireside fairy in a sick-room, and thinks of everything and every one but herself; who knows how

and when to do everything; but then she is not a fair example (though a very beautiful woman), for I'm certain she must have a divining chrystal for finding out people's wishes, and a magic wand for executing them; for in the matter of rare fruits and choice flowers alone, she would set the very seasons, ay, even Thomson's! at defince.

There, H****** W*********, don't, because you happen to be a very distinguished artist yourself, be guilty of the affectation of pretending not to recognise the likeness, in this little *croquis* of mine; however, I shall hope to *see you at length,* and then we'll compare it.

Poor little Jessy Fane being another Indian child, that is a child whose parents were in India, I really felt anxious that she should not be left to the tender mercies of the lady-like neglect of Miss James, and her teachers; and though I was quite well enough to have left my room, I enlisted Mr. Perkins in our cause, for he, as I before stated, was a most good-natured personage, and having told him that I wished to stay and nurse Helen and Jessy, he kindly concocted a *bulletin* for Miss James, stating that from the excite-ability of my *tempratoore,* he thought it advisable that I should keep my room, though not my bed. Blessed with a tremendous memory, I knew the "Arabian Nights," the "Tales of the Castle," the "Comtesse d'Anois," and of course those necessary rudiments of education, "Mother Bunch," and "Mother Goose's" Tales by heart. Judge then, if all the wits of the reign

of Anne, and Louis Quatorze, put together ever were thought half so agreeable as I was by Helen and Jessy; add to which, I had all sorts of personal anecdotes about Monsieur Galland, the Comtesse d'Anois, and Madame de Genlis, thanks to Mademoiselle de Guilleragues, and every one who has had anything to do with children knows their craving for the real "but is it true though?" that is the alpha and omega of their researches. Another proof of the immortality of the soul, that reality alone, that is *truth*, can satisfy it; and life we soon discover at best, or at worst, is nothing but one great fiction, an eternal seeming of things that ought to be, but are not. A little boy of five years old once said to me, after receiving a series of disheartening "nos" to his string of "is it true though?" respecting "Jack the Giant Killer," "Blue Beard," "The White Cat," "Puss in Boots," and "Robinson Crusoe," "Then it seems, *there is nothing true, but the Bible.*" Here was a young sage! to hit upon the only truth the world contains at five years old; who then can doubt "that of such, is the Kingdom of Heaven?"

As I foresaw, the first thing the poor little invalids rebelled against, was, the saponacious-looking mud, called barley-water; but I bribed Jemima to bring me a lemon, a few lumps of sugar, and a kettle of boiling-water, and, by a little additional bribery, I actually got her to stay, and see me make it, for the benefit of the future victims at Concave House.

"Lor, Miss! do you only put a table-spoonful of pearl-barley for that ere great jug, and wash it in such a many different waters?"

"Yes, in twelve different waters, Jemima, till the last water is quite clear, then I put the barley into the jug; and then I wash the lemon well, and rub it with a glass-cloth, very dry."

"Well, I never!"

"After which, I rub about four (not more) ordinary-sized lumps of sugar to it, so as to get off a good deal of the rind. I then throw them into the jug with the barley; and next peel the lemon very thin, so as to leave none of the white pulp on it: the whole of the lemon-peel, I next put into the jug, but none of the juice; then I pour boiling-water on these things till the jug is full, and in half an hour it is fit to drink, being of a bright lemon-colour, but quite clear, and tasting as a fresh lemon off the tree smells, and is so palatable, that it may be called fever champagne!"

"Laws-a-me! and don't you bile it at all, Miss?"

"No; that would spoil it, just as boiling coffee spoils it."

"Well, we don't take all that trouble; we jist washes a quarter of a pound of barley once, and ater this one renching (rincing) we chucks it into a sarsepan, and puts it on the fire to bile till it's thick."

"And utterly undrinkable," said I, and then pouring out some of mine into a tumbler, and standing it for a

few minutes in a basin of cold water to cool, I gave it to Jemima to taste.

"Lor! well, that is beautiful to be sure! I couldn't have believed that hannythink so hinnocent could be so pleasant. I'm sure, if I was Miss James, instead of letting the young ladies make such a litter with that ere cotton-velvet, and gold-paper, and filagree work, that only looks rubbishy, after all, when it's done, I'd make e'em learn to make nice things to heat and to drink, which would be of some use; for hevery one likes eating and drinking, and nobody cares for gold-paper, and cotton-velvet flowers, except to call 'em "vulgar trumpery," as I heerd Lady Plantagenet say to her daughters, when I showed her into the drawing-room, one day as she came to see you, Miss."

I was rather of Jemima's opinion, and have often and often wondered, why in a country of such decided man-worship, as England, girls in no class of life are brought up to know how to make their homes comfortable. The poor lady who marries a poor gentleman, nine times out of ten, sinks down into a hopeless, helpless dawdle, or a cross drudge; while the husband takes refuge from his slatternly and comfortless domicile in clubs and committees. The tradesman's daughter who marries a solicitor's, or any other clerk, and lets lodgings, allows her house, her children, and herself, to go in rags, while she is belabouring a wiry piano, tricking out her "parlours" with trumpery china, and bazaar knick-knacks, simulating the Paris fashions in

English velvet and mock-lace, or giving thundering knocks at the door, to show that she is as good as her lodgers, I beg pardon, they never let lodgings, that would be vulgar; they merely oblige people by dividing their house, it being too large for them, however small; not that that necessitates them to "receive inmates," they never were accustomed to such a thing, (and so indeed it would appear from their way of going on); in short, they are quite above that, and understand nothing about making bargains till the day of reckoning comes, when presto, they are seized with a confluent attack of shop, which proves at all events, that they perfectly understand *driving* them, and hard ones too, with every aggravated symptom of extortion.

Then go a few steps lower down the ladder, and still the same ignorance, helplessness, false aims, and wrongly directed struggles prevail; the wife with very few exceptions, is either a slattern or a shrew; in short, in one word, she don't understand the art, the woman's art, *par excellence*, of keeping her house together, of knowing how things should be, and then having them as they ought to be; absent buttons, bad dinners, and comfortless rooms, drive as many poor men to the public house, as the same causes make hosts of (so called) rich men loathe the four walls, called home. All men are *tant soit peu épicures*, whether their gourmandise soars into the aristocratic regions of a *salmi de bécasses aux truffes, sauté*

au vin de Champagne, wedges itself within the plebeian commonwealth of bacon and beans, or confines itself to the anchorite luxury of a well-dressed potatoe; and as this said gourmandise is all-to-nothing the most harmless of their vices, and the least tyrannical of their privileges, they should most unquestionably be indulged in it. It is seldom that that sex which has no pity for ours, is deserving of compassion from us; but I do pity that unfortunate gentleman most sincerely, whether he be peer, or ploughman, rich commoner, or poor cobbler, who sees everything in his house wrong, and finds everything at his table uneatable.

The barley-water plot, as has been seen, past off with impunity, and having been repeated several times with the approbation of Mr. Perkins, who said I should take out a patent for it, I grew bold, and when Jessy and Helen were able to sit up, and had returned to their normal state, namely, one of ravenous hunger, which certainly the Concave House beef-tea was not calculated to appease, I bethought me of another conspiracy; but surrounded as I was by five and thirty famishing fellow-creatures, I hope the reader has not so bad an opinion of me as to suppose, that I had the smallest coin of the realm remaining out of the ten guineas I had brought to school with me. No, thank Heaven! I had not; and poor Grace had left me seven guineas of hers when she went away, which I did not find till a long time after, as she had put them into a little red morocco doll's trunk, and five and twenty

shillings were all that now remained of that hoard; what was to be done? Helen kept longing to be at home, that she might have fricasseed chicken, while poor Jessy, better broken in to the Concave House *régime,* was more humble, and said she did not care what she had, if she could only *get too much !*

"What do you mean, Jessy, child?"

"Oh! Madame Beccaccia and all the teachers are always talking about our eating too much; and I don't know what it is, so I'm always longing for it."

Helen and I both laughed, and she said:

"Ah! my poor Jess! if you had ever known what it is to have too much, or even enough here, I'm afraid you'd long for it still more."

I said nothing, for I had early in life a detestation of words, when deeds were required, and I was thinking how I could possibly get them a fricassée of chicken. Provisions were dearer then than they are now; besides, I had the maids to bribe; there is no luxury to be had in England without money, more especially sympathy. The first thing to be done, then, was evidently to secure the maids, even if I had to owe some, some few shillings* on the chickens, the cream, and the cox-

* I think I hear some ultra-moral reviewer, or literary gentleman exclaim (*they are all moral in print !*) "A pretty sort of young lady, truly, to go in debt before she was seventeen!" My dear Sir, I am well aware of the difference that does, and no doubt ought to exist between those in every way superior beings, young gentlemen, and those embryo beasts of burden, young ladies; and that though debts *ab ovo* may be all very proper for the former, it is a monstrous and

combs. I went into the dressing-room—I mean the room where the basins and towels were kept—I turned out the contents of my exhausted receiver (*i. e.*, my purse) into my lap. Matters were worse even than I had supposed (they always are in a financial crisis)—there were only three and twenty shillings and sixpence. Dear me! how I wished at that time (and upon my honour it was the only time I ever was guilty of so great an enormity) that I was the Prince Regent. What a pleasant thing it must be to go down to Parliament, and say, "I want more money!" and what a still pleasanter thing when Parliament *comes down* with the money—though I remember often hearing in those days, that there were great differences existing between the Crown and the Parliament; but I suppose the chief difference was, and is, that the Crown *supplies the grants*, and the Parliament *grants the supplies;* if so, commend me to the latter.

I returned into the bed-room; it was *entre chien et loup;* and in the gloaming, I always had to tell the children a story. Of course, on that evening, I selected the story of "The Rich Miser of Antwerp," for, as Washington Irving truly says, "there is nothing half so magnificent as the imagination of a beggar."

unpardonable thing in the latter. Agreed; but still, my dear Sir, search the voluminous archives of your highly-stored memory, and you will find that even the best regulated young ladies, at a far earlier age, go in debt to the cake-woman at school, and as Miriam's friends were ill, and it was for them, pray don't be *too* hard upon her.

Accordingly, I quadrupled, at the very least, Mynheer von Guilderclutchen's fabulous wealth, for when one does not in reality know where to get a penny, it is some comfort (though a poor one) to draw upon the inexhaustible coinage of the brain. The tale told, I did not find that the tuns, trunks, chests, cellars, and trunk-hose full of gold produced the wonderful effect I had intended, for the *Me* is uppermost in us all, whether we see lovers and churches in the moon, or hear a Popish plot in every pop-gun; so both Jessy and Helen said, almost simultaneously,—

"But you did not tell us what Mynheer Von Guilderclutchens had for dinner?"

"No," laughed I; "I mean to tell you that to-morrow," and here Jemima brought lights into the room, and shut the shutters, after which I way-laid her into the next room, and, after giving her a five-shilling piece for herself, and confiding to her care its twin-brother for the cook, I told her all I wanted, and that I would pay her whatever more the things came to, if she could so arrange everything that I could go down for half an hour the next day, before dinner, into the kitchen. Jemima promised everything, even to borrowing a stew-pan for me from the scullion at the Palace, and an omelette-pan to fry my *croutons* in. So far—so well. I had just concluded my treaty with Jemima, and was preparing to make my ablutions for the night, when a dark shadow fell upon one of the pendant towels. I looked round, and saw that its lawful sub-

stance was what we commonly called Miss Sharpe. Had she been actually "*riding in her carriage,*" and had driven over me, I could not have been more frightened—that is, more startled—than I was by her sudden, though hoofless apparition.

"Good gracious, Miss Sharpe!" cried I, nearly letting the jug fall out of my hand, "how you frightened me, I had no idea you were there."

"Oh! no—yes—that is—I have been two days trying to find an opportunity—that is—I—you—to find you alone, to give you this letter; and if you will have the goodness to put your answer under the stocks in the closet where the back-boards and dumb-bells are kept."

"Has Miss James read it?" asked I, as I took the letter, growing suddenly amazingly proper and punctilious, more, I fear from surprise, than anything else.

"Heaven forbid!" said Miss Sharpe, as she rushed out of the room, like the heroine of a melo-drama, mistaking the noise of a rat in the wainscoat, for the return of the Baron from Palestine, who has, will, or was to have ruined her. What could it all mean? I had not seen any *lovely men!* at church, or dropped my prayer book, or any other hint, that could entail upon me the insult of a letter. I sniffed it, as a dog might a pair of fur slippers, sufficiently suspicious to excite his attention; but it had no odour of Pipeclay—nor

even of musk, (faugh). I then looked at the superscription, the address was all *en règle.*

"MISS MIRIAM SEDLEY,

"CONCAVE HOUSE,

"KENSINGTON GORE."

But the hand was quite unknown to me; I turned to the seal, but that was equally mute, being an owl. At length, like Hamlet with his father's ghost, I resolved to question the apparition letter itself: it ran as follows:

"Dear Miss Miriam Sedley,

"I scarcely know how to word the request I am going to make you, for indeed, our family ought to be so very differently circumstanced; and my dear father is so proud, that I am sure he would rather die than be obliged to any one," (humph! an amiable gentleman thought I,) "therefore what I am now doing, I do, entirely from myself, and as I would not have it known for the world, I trust to your honour not to let any one be aware of the slight favour I am about to ask you, and which I hope to make well worth your while to grant, as I too, like my dear father, am proud, and cannot bear being obliged to any one; but as it may be in my power, materially to serve you during the remainder of your stay at Miss James's, what I am about to ask you, may be considered as merely a mutual

accommodation; you, from always, or nearly always, being last in school of a morning, have upon an average from half-a-crown to three shillings a-week to pay in forfeits, and still more for the hand-screens you spoil, not because you cannot paint quite as well, or better than the other young ladies, but because you don't like the occupation, and therefore, never have patience to finish them properly; now, I shall be very happy to save you all these forfeits for the future, by not reporting you as late, and finishing all the screens, or watch-pockets for you, if you will lend me five pounds!

"Oh! Miss Sedley, don't refuse, on my knees I ask it; for my little sister Margaret has had the scarlet fever, the doctor's bill is a heavy one, a great deal more I fear than five pounds; my mother is afraid to ask my father for it, he has been so out of temper ever since the shameful expense he was put to for my sister's wedding with Lord Mountflummery, which never took place! and I have only two guineas in the world, till Miss James pays my next quarter: indeed, Miss Sedley, I will pay you by instalments of a guinea a month; and pray remember that in my saving you the forfeits, this is only a mutual accommodation, and not a favour that I am asking. Pray—pray don't refuse me.

"Your obedient servant,

"Selina Sharpe."

"P.S.—I shall anxiously look under the stocks for

your answer to-morrow morning—if you will have the goodness to place it there in the closet with the dumb-bells."

I don't know when I had experienced such a mosaic of opposing feelings as on the perusal of this letter; I was, I own, utterly and heartily disgusted at its servile meanness, and at the same time its cold, false, vulgar pride—the whole thing was so contrary to what I had seen, and been taught upon the chapter of helping our fellow-creatures. Mademoiselle de Guilleragues' precept, and my uncle's practice was, "When you ask, if it is only for a glass of water, ask it with a frank cordiality of manner that shall elevate the trifling demand into a serious service to you at the time, which will not only oblige the person who bestows it, but shall make them really wish they had the power of serving you to a greater extent, as you have raised them in their own opinion, and showed you thought well of them by your manner of asking them a favour, for the manner is everything" (indeed is it); "but when you give, an it were a kingdom, make no more of it, than if it were but a glass of water, and by so doing, you will double the value of the service: keep to yourself whatever trouble or sacrifice it may have cost you, for when we bestow we should be silent—but when we receive we should be eloquent, or else we should not condescend to accept."

This, dear uncle, was the doctrine Christ taught

before you practised it; but the nominal Christians of the nineteenth century leave their Divine Master alone in His glory—which is nothing new. Epicurus lived on roots; but the epicureans are all sensualists. I was not only disgusted, but indignant, that Miss Sharpe should think so poorly of me, as to make the pleasure of doing a service, a matter of barter and exchange—nay more, of dishonest favouritism. Oh! Napoleon Buonaparte, thou wert right! we *are* a nation of shopkeepers, and nothing I fear will root this sordid, narrow, selfish buying and selling canker out of us—nothing certainly as long as we hear from our senate, "That the *protection of property* is the chief aim of legislation."

However, the great thing in all transactions is to come to the point, and the point now in question was, that Miss Sharpe's sister was ill, and that Miss Sharpe herself was in distress for five pounds; and there is a sanctity about all affliction that hallows even the meanest mode of expressing it. Five pounds! and I had not five pence in the world! Lady Paulett was in Paris, Lady Plantagenet—Mrs. Waltham—Nelly, they all passed through my mind like lightning; but then it would take time to borrow from them, and Miss Sharpe wanted the money by the next morning.

Where and how could I get it? oh, the Margravine's bracelet, Mr. Waltham's chain, the poor Duke of Brunswick's little enamel watch, of the cherubs with their sapphire and pearl wings—*that* I should

have felt sorry to part with, both for his sake and its own; but how part with them? how get out? It was now half-past eight; in another half hour the girls would come up to go to bed, and I should have to be at the muster; still I must try, Jemima had that good commercial common sense inherent in every individual Anglo Saxon, which has made us collectively the wealthiest people in the world, for we not only know better than any other (the Swiss excepted) how to get money—but what is far more important *how to keep it!* when we have got it: so upon the circulating medium of Jemima's commercial sense, I now began to build; when, as if approving my design, providence at that moment sent her to the door.

"Come in," said I, in answer to her knock.

"Please, Miss Sedley, Mrs. Quince is below, she just looked in to say that she had bought the half of a wedding-cake this morning from the housekeeper up at Lord Sinecures, and if you would like to have it, it's very cheap—only nine shillings and sixpence."

"I can't have it now—perhaps to-morrow—I don't know; but, Jemima, I want you to do me a favour."

"Lawk, Miss! anythink as I can do."

"Well," said I, interrupting her, "as soon as all the young ladies are in bed, and the teachers have all gone down, I want you to go as far as the town—I don't mean London—but Kensington, with me."

"Laws a me, Miss!" almost shrieked Jemima, first flinging up her arms, and then flapping them against

her sides like a bird flapping its wings, "I dusen't, indeed, I dusen't, Miss James would be the death o' me, if she come to hear on it."

"But she shall not hear of it; I assure you I am not going to do any harm, and we shall not be more than half an hour before we are back."

"Oh! it's quite unpossible, Miss; I'll go for anythink with pleasure, but I raley dusen't let you go."

"Then if you won't go with me, I'll go by myself: for go I must."

"Well, Lor! now you frighten me more than hever, for I'm sadly afeard there's one of them young chaps of hofficers in the wind."

I felt terribly indignant at this most servant-maidish suspicion, till recollecting that take the matter which way one would, it certainly did not look well for a young lady, who had arrived at years of indiscretion, to want to issue out secretly from a boarding-school after nine at night, when all her companions were in bed, so I checked myself, and said calmly:

"If you come with me, Jemima, you will see that I am not doing anything wrong."

"I think I see myself, or rather, I think I see Miss James's cap not wanting me to starch it for the next month, and Miss Omeny's wig a standing on end, like hair in a natrel state, and Mr. Perkins a hordering senna and salts permiscus round the school, servants hincluded; thank you, Miss, but you raley must hexcuse me."

Like many more distinguished diplomatists, I now began and ended with "nonsense!"

"Now listen to reason, Jemima; I'll give you a guinea if you'll come with me, but I shall not give it to you till we return"—(no, it would have been rather difficult to have done so,) concluded I, with a sort of *millionnaire* dignity, which, I must say, was in no degree warranted by the actual state of my pockets—"so no more nonsense."

"Well, Lor a mercy me, Miss, there is no saying no to you, you have such taking ways."

"No, no, Jemima, *you have.*"

"Oh! but really I'm afeard, I am indeed, Miss," still hesitated Jemima.

"Nonsense! you won't be afraid of the new cap, I shall give you, besides the guinea; and if it fits, pray wear it."

Jemima was vanquished. M. de Lamennais is right: "tout s'achète, parceque tout se vend," and if even a poor ignorant maid-servant's integrity was so easily bought at that time, only think, how dog-cheap a minister's must have been! for *those* were the days of bribery and corruption. How we have improved! for *these* are the days of economy and retrenchment, so that there is little or no more *bribery*, but *en revanche* we have (the Lord John be praised) plenty of corruption!

Madame Beccaccia, now putting her head in at the door, to know if I was coming to prayers,

I said "directly," and then I turned to Jemima to impress upon her to meet me on the first landing of the back-staircase at a quarter-past nine.

"Dear me, it would be no fun though, to meet one of the teachers, and mistake her for you in the dark, Jemima."

"No, nor for me either, to take one of them for you, Miss; and how shall I know it's you?"

"I'll tell you, I'll say nothing: as I'm not fond of darning, that is the soonest mended; and if it's you, Jemima, when you hear any one, say 'guinea pig,' no one else will know what it means, and I'll take hold of your gown, and you shall then tow me down stairs."

Upon this, Jemima went her way, and I mine, first slipping my night-gown and dressing-gown on over my clothes, for I had not undressed.

However pharisaical they may have been, I must do them the justice to say, that they did not "make long prayers like the Sadducees," at Concave House; and as "wash—and be ye clean" formed the part of the ceremony, the "young ladies" were soon in bed. Still Madame Beccaccia lingered (people always do if you want them to go) and with many a sigh, and much groaning continued to hover about a small chest of drawers, that divided her bed from mine. In one of these drawers was a large black wine bottle—it was true it was labelled "dentifrice;" but as the disaffected

(and they were many) were wont to remark, it had "a most excellent smell of brandy;" in short, why should I conceal from my dear and discreet friend, the reader, that which was to be soon, too soon, made manifest to Madame Beccaccia, and even to Miss James herself; this bottle had become a mark for ill-will and invective, as the great and the prominent are too apt to do in small communities, and a conspiracy had long been hatching against it, which had now reached its culminating point: but of this anon.

"Ahem! young ladies, do draw your curtains; I don't wonder at your always complaining of colds; as for me, though it is only the third week in September, I am distracted with the tooth-ache: dear, dear, what terrible pain it is: I must rince my mouth with some "dentifrice." And so saying, she turned her back upon the long vista of beds, in order to open the drawer, when instantly, with the unity and precision of a military manœuvre, every girl in the room was leaning on her left elbow, "eyes right!" watching Madame Beccaccia's movements, who at that moment, true to her name, was revelling in suction; but I, who was the nearest to the scene of action, was surprised to see that near the bottle there was also a small liqueur glass, which had every appearance of being an *habitué* of the drawer, or in other words, like Mr. Perkins, always on the spot *pro*fessionally. This glass, Madame Beccaccia now filled, and the next moment emptied,

swallowing the "dentifrice" most heroically, and making no sign or sound, save a slight echo of her tongue, which smacked of contentment.

"Ah!" said Madame Beccaccia, drawing a long breath, "that has done me good."

"Dear me!" cried Miss Dickens, "I had no idea people could speak with their mouth full of dentifrice."

"Not very well," responded the woodcock, now affecting the inarticulate, and placing her handkerchief before her mouth, as she prepared to leave the room; and she had no sooner closed the door, than Miss Sherwood sprang out of bed, and locked it.

"What on earth are you about?" said I, thinking of my own *escapade*, and not at all liking this preliminary, though there was an egress through the washing-room.

"Hush!" cried she, still with her ear to the key-hole, listening to our fat friend's retreating footsteps; and when she heard the last of them, and the drawing-room door shut-to, bursting into a loud laugh, as she pulled down the bed-clothes, first off of one bed, and then off another, with the exception of Helen's and Jessy's, and added: "Now, girls—now's your time; now or never. Have you got your knives and scissors ready? *Sharp's* the word! as old Sharpe says, when she is telling that endless story about Miss Sarah Jane Sharpe's going to church, only, alas! to be left in the lurch. Ha! ha! ha! as Miss James is so fond of

poetry and Perkins, I wish she heard that;" and so saying, she struck a light.

In answer to this stirring appeal from Miss Sherwood of *aux armes, bonnets de nuit*, all the girls sprang out of bed, either brandishing a pen-knife or a pair of scissors. The mock-heroic of the whole affair threw me into a convulsion of laughter, particularly as Miss Sherwood, the commander-in-chief of the forces, had a peculiarly elegant maid-of-all-work method of training her vermilion locks in the way they should go, by rolling them round pieces of paper at night, and screwing each end of the paper tightly together; so that, on each side of her forehead, they now looked like pyramids of red-hot Lilliputian cannon-balls, while the paper did duty for blank-cartridge.

As soon as every bed had been abdicated, their occupants fell into rank and file of two and two: and Miss Sherwood, then seizing the poker, which she shouldered sword-ways, next gave the word of command, in a tone that even Algernon Fitzpipeclay—Miss Dickens's Algernon!—might have envied:

"To the right about face! Quick march! Present—fire!"

And here they all charged for the head of the room, between Madame Beccaccia's bed and mine, the chest of drawers being evidently the first fortress they meant to attack; but as even neutral ground is not always safe in time of war, I thought it high time to hoist a flag of truce, or, if you like it better, to show the white

feather; for kneeling upon the bed, and holding my pillow up like a battering-ram, with both hands, I cried out:

"For goodness sake, most valiant Buffs, what are you going to do?"

"*Do* for old Beccaccia's brandy-bottle; that is, spill it all about the drawer, so as to make tipsy-cake of her frills and furbelows; and then cut the sacking and cords of her bed, that as soon as ever she begins pitching and tossing, down she will come crash! with the frame of the bedstead round her neck, like a necklace, or a horse-collar (what a job for Glauber Rodolphus!) and then, of course, she'll think that the '*dentifrice*' perished in the earthquake."

"Pray consider what you are about," said I. "Spill the brandy, and welcome; and to show you that I'm as good a man as any of you, I'll help you to crack a bottle with pleasure; but don't cut the sacking of the bed; for poor Beccaccia might be seriously hurt."

"Hurt a feather-bed! hurt—nonsense!" and in another moment, the bedding was on the floor, and "the glittering fore-fex" opening wide, above the doomed sacking.

"Stop—stop, Caroline," cried Miss Dickens, seizing her friend's arm.

"Why surely, Mary Anne, you, who planned the whole affair, are not going to turn coward, or king's evidence, I hope now?"

"Neither the one nor the other, only I don't want you to do it to-night."

"Not to-night! and what's that for, pray?" asked Field Marshal Sherwood of Field Marshal Dickens; "goodness knows when we may get another opportunity. I hate people who are heroes to plan danger, and cowards to face it."

It is well known that F. M. are the two most laconic letters in the alphabet; so Miss Dickens looked pistols, and pipe-clay, but all she said was:

"Caroline, I want to speak to you."

But Caroline furious, turned upon me, seizing me by the shoulder till she really hurt me; and in the struggles of defence, and attack, not only both our caps fell off, but the combs came out of our hair, which now was streaming about our shoulders, and getting entangled in each other's meshes in a sort of desperate game of *rouge et noir*.

"This, I suppose, is *your* doing, Miss Sedley? with your high-flown ideas of practical jokes being vulgar; and never doing behind the governesses' backs what you would not do before their faces: and I suppose you have bought over, with that eternal green purse of yours full of gold, when the rest of us are obliged to be content with beggarly shillings, and sixpences, and not even enough of them. I suppose, I say," she concluded hoarse with rage, "that you have bought over that cowardly fool, Mary Anne?"

"Nay really, Miss Sherwood," said I, trying to disentangle my hair from hers, "if there be any cowardice in our proceedings, I think it is on your part; for this is taking an unfair advantage of me, when you know I *can't return your fire!*"

At this, there was an universal roar, and Miss Sherwood letting go my shoulder, and seizing a pair of scissors from her sister, who acted as her aide-de-camp, furiously severed herself from me, leaving me one of her scarlet locks as a trophy.

"Now, Carry dear, do listen to reason," said Miss Dickens, forcibly drawing her friend aside, where the two commanders whispered together for some seconds, the troops standing (not exactly at ease, for they were beginning to get very cold, and uncomfortable), but with their arms lowered. Whatever the magic words were that had passed between the chiefs, they had the effect of translating Miss Sherwood from Mars into March, for she "went out like a lamb;" and coming up to me, said:

"Mary Anne is right; we had better put it off till another night. I beg your pardon, Miriam, for my violence, just now."

"Oh, don't mention it," rejoined I, putting out my hand, and dropping a genuine tear to the memory of my poor aunts; for I had not seen so good a pitched battle since I left them; "you reminded me of some friends at a distance," I added.

"Where, I should say, they had better keep, if they

use you like Caroline Sherwood," sneered a tall, sallow girl of the name of Hunter, who was the blistering ointment of the school.

"Come, girls," said Miss Dickens, "you must rebuild the woodcock's nest; and Mirry Sedley, I am sure, will sing us a song; a French one let it be, as the war is over."

"With all my heart," said I, instantly sighing forth with great feeling, and expression:

"Où peut-on être mieux,
Qu'au sein de sa famille ?"

which I selected as a vent for my own feelings; the delicacy of which was of course lost upon my auditors; for, like the deaths sometimes announced in "The Times," I intended that "*friends at a distance would be pleased to accept this as a notice*" that I was thinking of them.

Pardon me, my public, that I should thus splash you *en passant* with this little Trafalgar-square spurt of sentiment; I who detest your professors of snivelling, from Laurence Sterne and his dead donkey, down to his modern burglars, and their living ones, who bepuff them; for these gentry, after making of the public their Moab (their own literary clique supplying them with soft-soap) seem in every chuckle of their triumphant *charlatanerie* to exclaim with King David, "Man*asses*, you are mine!" So much thought I, as I arranged my torn collar, for the lady-like demeanour inculcated

at Miss James's: suppressing all feeling, it would appear, does not suppress all temper.

Having enjoined Helen and Jessy to lie still, under the pretext of settling my hair, I went into the dressing-room, where, hastily throwing off my dressing and night-gown, I went to the large wardrobe outside on the landing, where the bonnets and cloaks were kept, and taking down my own, I was soon equipped, first having collected my few valuables, and putting the extinguisher on the candle, I went quietly down the back staircase, which was very dark, there being no moon. The most perilous part of the journey was the having to pass the door of Miss James's sitting-room, the sitting-room which was within the passage opposite the door leading to the great staircase. There came a great din of voices now from within this room; but above them all squeaked Mr. Perkins' falsetto dealing forth the following aphorism, which, for its truth, I shall repeat.

"Depend upon it, ladies," said Glauber Rodolphus, "Imem (Hymen) his the honly hoculest that ever cures love of blindness."

Hurrying past, I ran hastily down the next flight, till I came to the first landing, where I stopped, and showed my sense as a "British female" ought always to do; and as far as conversation goes, always does do, by saying nothing. Not so my accomplice, who exclaimed with more dissatisfaction than discretion:

"Laws-a-me, Miss! instead of guinea pig, it might

have been a whole litter of guinea pigs, and Hampshire hogs too, from the time as I've been a-hanging out to dry like here. I thought as you never would come; you said a quarter past nine, and it has just gone the half hour by Kensington Church."

"Well, the greater reason why we should make haste, Jemima," said I.

"I bleeve you, Miss; and supper a-going up at half-past ten, and a Welsh rabbit, special for Mr. Perkins—rabbit him! I say, with his Welsh rabbits! He's more plague nor enough. If so be *as it is to be*, I wish Miss James or Miss Homany, or both (if he warn't afeard of too strong a dose bringing hon a haction for bigamy) would marry him at oncet, and have done with it; for there's reason in hall things, and rally this courting lasts too long. Midsummer twelvemonth, hall the love was done to lobsters, and cherry tarts; next half-year it was to collops and prawn curries, and this half, it's to pigeon pies, mock turtle, and toasted cheese, till the house hactually smells like a rat-trap; and hall for a little whipper-snapper of a whitebrown-looking potecary! Well, there's no accounting for taste, but if there wasn't another living cretur of the *contrairy sect* hon the face of the hearth for me to keep company with, and Glauber Rodolphus Perkins was a tom-tit, and could be caught for the vally (value) of a pinch of salt, sprinkled on his tail, hI'd be very sorry to defraud a basin of water-gruel of that pinch of salt, as heven the water-gruel would be

so much more to my taste; though hif there his one thing that hi despise more nor another, and can't abide, *it is* water-gruel!"

Jemima having favoured me with this synopsis of her sentiments, metaphysical and matrimonial, respecting Mr. Perkins, and expounded the doctrine of attraction in an inverse ratio, proceeded to unbolt the back door leading into the garden, through which we now issued, accomplishing the first stage to the garden-gate in an incredibly short space of time. Once in the road, I hurried on as if I had broken into (instead of out of) a house, and the emissaries of justice were at my heels, feeling almost as frightened, and my heart beating so violently, that, as we came opposite the Palace gates, I was obliged to stop to take breath.

If I, who was doing no harm, but merely resorting to the only means within my power to try and serve a person, felt so frightened and guilty, merely because I was committing the twin faults of disobedience and concealment, what must those feel who have really done, or are going to do wrong? Poor creatures! if only the former, let them desist; alas! if the latter, let them repent; both will suffice to God, though neither may appease man.

"Lor a mercy me! what hever hare you a-going to do, Miss?" said Jemima, seeing me stop, and thinking, no doubt, that I was going to cross over and brave the sentries.

"I want to go to a jeweller's shop," said I.

"A jeweller's shop! well, I never! You're never a-going to buy the ring, sure-ly! it's for he to do that; and if he don't, he must be a poor, paltry, mean-sperited feller, as bad as Perkins!—one of them ere sort of chaps of which hi'm sorry to say there his but too many; hall for a-getting heverything out of you, and giving nothink. Don't have nothink to do with him, Miss, hif he is—now don't ee. Though I ham but a poor servant gal, pray be hadvised, Miss, by one has knows the contrairy sect well, and knows has there is never no good to be got of them there sort of close-fisted devils, male or female. A close fist and a ard art always goes together,—that's *my* maxim; and them as is so near, I always wishes further."

I assured Jemima (who, like Dante in his "Inferno," appeared to pass by every other vice with toleration, but to shudder with implacable loathing at avarice, in which horror I most cordially sympathize), and assured her, with an earnestness that carried conviction along with it, that I was not going to buy any ring, and gave her my word of honour that I was not going to commit myself to the tender mercies of any of the "contrairy sect," as she justly denominated them, a vow, however, which the Recording Angel (being probably busy with the late Mr. Daniel O'Connell's at the time), forgot to "register in heaven." Thus re-assured, we crossed over, and Jemima said she would take me to a very *genteel* man's,—indeed, she might say quite the gentleman, as he never gave, or took coppers! and had once

trusted her for six months for a pair of coral ear-rings, and though even *then* she was eighteen pence short of the money, he said it was of no consequence.

"I should just like to know," concluded she, "how many leap-years of Sundays I should be getting even eighteen pence out of Mr. Perkins."

"Do you mean to say he has never given you anything?"

"Yes, Miss; lots of trouble and plenty of pills; and I should just like to have served him as I served them; that is, chucked him out of winder."

"I hope it's not far where your jeweller lives, Jemima?"

"Mr. Hopkins, Miss; not five minutes: that large corner shop, that you see so lit up down yander, Miss, with hall the tea-pots, and thimbles, and watches, and rings, and such like."

Had I really been on the expedition that Jemima at first suspected, my heart could not have beaten more violently, nor my limbs trembled so much, as they did when I stood before the glittering shop-window of Mr. Christopher Hopkins.

"Have the goodness to wait here, Jemima," said I, "and I'll be out in a few minutes."

"And mus'n't hi go hin with you, Miss?"

"No, thank you, Jemima; for it is upon some business of another person's, and I have no right to let it be known to any one."

"Well, but raley, Miss, I don't know has I can let

you go in alone. 'Spose has you should give me the slip through the back door, what hever should I say to Miss James? Hit hisn't Perkins, hI suspect, as could make hup the pill or plaister that could put that to rights. Now, once more, *do* be hadvised by me, Miss; and, bleeve me, has matrimo-ny is a desperate remedy, has don't agree with hevery constitootion, has Mr. Perkins would say, oh! dear no—very far from it!"

Oh! Miss Sharpe, Miss Sharpe! little did you know all the sharp insults you were subjecting me to! and, as I possessed neither your nor your father's pride, I should at that moment have been most sincerely obliged to any stranger then passing who would have given me the money, and prevented my having the additional humiliation of going into that shop. There is something so debasing in selling anything (except one's principles, that, if not exactly honourable in itself, generally procures honours, and, at all events, shows that one *once possessed principles,* or else one couldn't have sold them.)

"No; I cannot let you come in with me, Jemima. But surely you can see through the window whether I attempt to leave the shop by any other door but this one; and if I do, why, then, I give you free leave to rush in and prevent my escape."

"Laws a me! well I spose there haint no help for it. What is to be, must be, as the good woman said when she married her fourth husband the morning her third

was hanged—and serve him right, too, I've no doubt. But lor, Miss ! make haste, pray : for honly think of the toasted cheese, and the risk hi'm running !"

I promised all possible expedition, and indeed had she known but all, I was infinitely more anxious to get back, than she could have been to get me back. I suppose I coloured and trembled, and looked, almost as foolish as I felt, upon entering Mr. Hopkins's Panorama of Golconda; for that gentleman, a small wiry-looking personage, with a pale face much pitted with the small-pox, as if Time to get over such an ugly business had beguiled himself by playing cribbage on it; small, sharp, lead-coloured eyes, a very pinched aquiline nose, and dry, dusty dark hair, standing bolt upright from his forehead, as if it had just been galvanized into the model of a porcupine, now came forward, pantomimically washing his hands, and bowing over his counter, half-cringingly, half-impertinently, said :

" What can I ave the pleasure of showing of you this hevening, Miss ?"

" Thank you," stammered I, " I don't want to buy anything; I only—that is—could you let me speak to you at the other end of the shop," said I, walking down to the counter that ran across the shop at the farther end, so as to turn my back on the window, and prevent Jemima seeing what was passing within, though she could still see me perfectly, " I wish to know," said I, as soon as Mr. Christopher Hopkins

had also transported himself to that part of the shop, producing the Margravine's much esteemed emerald bracelet, "what you would give me for this bracelet?"

"In money, Miss, or in exchange?"

"In money," said I faintly, growing as red as if I had stolen everything in the shop; Mr. Hopkins's dull, yet sharp leaden eyes instead of looking at the bracelet as he took it out of my hand, wandered in the rudest and most impertinent scrutiny over my face; and then he said, with an insolence that ought to have choked him, as it nearly did me:

"Why, were it the rubies in that lovely face, though a tolerably wealthy man, I fear as I should ave to decline the purchase from hinability to give a hadequate value."

"Sir," said I, pointing to my bracelet authoritatively, as I retreated a few paces, my eyes flashing in a manner worthy of my aunts, while my voice was as *tranchante* as any axe could have been even in the reign of Harry the Eighth or his worthy daughter Bess; "Sir! if you cannot attend to your business without so far forgetting yourself, as to be guilty of such impertinent familiarity with those who do you the honour of coming to your shop, my servant is outside, and I will go to another."

"Oh, beg pardon, Miss; meant no offence, I assure you, Miss, quite the contrary; but it's not every day one sees—, in short, Miss," added the reptile, rummaging in a tray for a magnifying glass, and then

wiping it with his handkerchief previously to examining the bracelet, "I'll attend to this here matter directly."

I stood with my arms folded, and as I tried to restrain the tumultuous palpitation I was suffering from, I almost fancied I could see the electric fluid of my burning indignation escaping in corruscations round me while I awaited his veto.

"Well, I'm sorry to say, Miss, as I couldn't make any hoffer at all for this here bracelet, as the stones are nothing but glass, and the setting nothing but brass."

Poor Gil Blas! what you must have felt at the perfidy of the Jewel of the Philippine Isles; and what a glow of admiration you must also have felt for the generosity of Camilla, as I did for that of the Margravine at that moment!

"Impossible," said I.

"Quite true, I assure you; we know all is not gold that glitters; but there's not even a particle of gold in this."

"And are these false, too?" asked I, despondingly handing him Mr. Waltham's chain and locket, with a heavy heart; for sooth to say, I had no longer any faith either in gold, or glory; and ever since, there has been a synonymous jumble in my mind between Anspach and Pinchbeck.

"No, these, Miss, are very good gold, and very nice workmanship; I shall be happy to allow you four pounds for them."

"Four pounds! oh, that will not do."

"Oh, I've no doubt, Miss, they cost infinitely more; but in new things it is for the workmanship we charge, and in second-hand things we never give anything for the workmanship."

The Venetian chain the Duc de Bouillon had given me, I had given to Grace. My poor little angels! that for so many years I had hung every night at the head of my bed, almost superstitiously thinking that they *were* what they seemed, and really did watch over me; and the poor kind donor in his grave too! it seemed almost a sacrilege. Oh! in this cold work-a-day stock-exchange of a world, how soon we find out that our heart is the temple of a persecuted faith, in which necessity is always committing sacrilege upon some one or other of affection's most costly feelings, or memory's most sacred relics! There was nothing for it—I drew the little watch from my bosom, undid the small chain of my uncle's and Grace's hair to which it was attached, and in no very articulate voice, said, laying it down on the counter, and pushing it over to him, "And this?"

"Ah! this is indeed a little gem, I don't know as ever I see a prettier thing; two little hangels keeping watch—pretty hidear, very. Well," said Mr. Hopkins, minutely scrutinizing first the painting, which really was exquisite, and then the works through the glass, exclaiming "beautiful!" to the first, "very good, though Geneva," to the second, and finally pronouncing the

sapphires and pearls to be without a flaw,—"Well, I don't mind Miss, hoffering as much as twenty guineas for this."

"I should have thought it cost much more than that?" said I, feeling this low price an insult to the merits of my little watch: for, as far as I was concerned, it was more money than I wanted.

"Ah! cost," echoed Mr. Hopkins, shrugging his shoulders, digging his elbows into his sides, and turning outwards his hands, so as to display to advantage the fine Rembrandt tone of the palms. "Ah! cost, that is a very different thing, Miss; but I doubt if heven Solomon's Temple had been brought to the hammer, six months after its completion, heven by Mr. George Robins, whether it would have fetched as much as the prime cost of the hapes and hivory his Majesty imported from Tarshish."

"Very well—you must have it," said I, taking up the poor little watch and kissing it, as Mr. Hopkins turned his back to get the money out of an iron box; in spite of all I could do to suppress them, two big tears fell on the angel's face; but that was of no consequence, for it is of tears and prayers that angels are made. Alas! that it should take so many of both, to make one!

"Do you prefer it in notes, or in gold, Miss?" asked Mr. Hopkins, with an agreeable running accompaniment of the latter metal.

"One ten-pound note, if you please, and the rest in gold."

"Very good, Miss," rejoined Mr. Hopkins, and the mighty sum was soon transferred to me.

"Good evening," said I, putting down my veil, (which, I am sorry to say, was as green as the wearer,) and hurrying out of the shop.

"Good hevening, Miss, much obleeged to you—shall never look at these hangels, without thinking of the hangel I bought 'em from."

"Lor! Miss, for even's sake make haste," said Jemima, as I rejoined her, "what a time you ave been: I began to think you was a-buying the whole shop."

"I'm glad of it," said I, abstractedly.

"I b'lieve you, Miss, any young lady would be glad to be hable to buy a jeweller's shop: sorry to hurry you, Miss, but the church-clock struck ten while you was at Mr. Hopkins's. Ain't he a genteel young man—don't take coppers, does he?"

No, thought I, with so much brass, he'd have no room for them.

"Laws, a me!" re-spouted Jemima, "Cook will be in a fine way if hi'm not back to the minute; the Welsh rabbit is done; and Perkins above stairs, a fidgetting his watch in and out, to see whether it is supper-time, and a-looking has famished, has if he fed at, instead of physicked, at the parish workhus; for though he is such a poor atomy of a looking ghost of

a leech, I assure you, Miss, he's quite a ruffian at the wittles; heats tremenjus!"

"Well, said I, laughing, "if he has too much to do, he'll find plenty ready to help him at 'Concave House.'"

"I b'lieve you, Miss—shame! hisn't it keeping the young ladies' happetites has sharp as the carving-knives, poor things."

"Not quite, Jemima, for we never cut the joints; it *is they that cut us!* but then to be sure, they come again—and again!"

"Well you've my sincere good wishes, Miss, as their ghosteses may haunt Miss James ater hevery supper has she gormondizes with that ere Glauber Rodolphus, as I hears her a calling on him, when she thinks no body's by. Some says his wife's dead, and some says she hisn't; but hi say hif she hisn't more shame for her; for hi calls it a reglar out and out shame, for hany decent woman to surwive labelling herself with the name of sich a feller as that Glauber; that's the name of the salts, Miss, hisn't it? so I s'pose he'd only a physic bottle to his god-father,—and—"

"Oh! thank heaven! here we are," said I, cutting short Jemima's memoirs of Mr. Perkins, whom it was evident, was far from being as great a favourite with her, as he was with her mistress.

"You may say, thank eaven, Miss," said she unlocking the gate.

"Now, Jemima, I'll get up stairs as fast as I can, and only have the goodness to bring me my writing-desk out of the school-room, up into the washing-room, and a light, and I'll give you what I promised you."

"Oh! thank you, Miss, but there's no call to hurry about that."

No, it is a remarkable fact among all classes, that people never *are* in want of money when you are going to pay it, or to give it to them; but if you won't or can't do so, *then* it is astonishing the urgent need they are in for it; so much so, indeed, that Shylock was a philanthropist and spendthrift compared to them.

It was not till Jemima had brought me the light, and disencumbered me of my things, and that I had drank a glass of water, that I could really believe that I had got safe back, without detection or disaster.

"There, Jemima, is the guinea I promised you; and half-a-guinea to get yourself a cap."

"Lor! Miss, I am sure I'm very much obliged to you; and now that I know what it his, and that it haint raley nothink wrong, I shall be very happy, Miss, to help you get hout when hever you like."

"Thank you, Jemima, but I shall not trouble you again," said I, smiling to think how instantaneously gold stops teeth, tongues, and consciences; and, though I am sure Jemima was perfectly sincere in offering to

play Grand Vizier to my Caliph Haroun Alraschid, yet had I felt inclined for any more nocturnal perambulations—which, Heaven knows, I was not—I really could not afford it.

After Jemima's departure, and another glass of water, I hastily wrote the following letter to Miss Sharpe, inclosing the £10 note in it:

"Dear Miss Sharpe,

"I feel extremely sorry to hear of your little sister's illness, though I trust she is by this time well over it. Not knowing what she would like, in the way of books or toys, I hope she will choose some for herself, and accept them from me.

"I feel hurt that you should put a condition to my rendering you any little service in my power: I think it so very natural that people *should* help one another, when they can; it is to me the greatest pleasure any one can procure me, and it is time enough to refuse, when one is really unfortunate enough not to have it in one's power: besides, I am sure you would do the same for me. Therefore, I beg to assure you, that you owe me nothing; and I shall feel seriously hurt if you ever allude to this subject again.

"Above all, do not fail to report me late, when I am late. Don't screen me by your talents. I hate favouritism, because it cannot exist without injustice.

"Hoping soon to hear that your sister is quite convalescent,

"Believe me, dear Miss Sharpe,

"Your much obliged

MIRIAM SEDLEY."

Having undressed, folded, sealed, and directed my letter, I put out the light, and crept softly back to bed, where I had the pleasure of hearing all the late insurgents fast asleep; a good example that I soon followed, without, I hope, making such a noise about it.

CHAPTER II.

The next morning, I woke early. My first feeling was an uncomfortable one. I mechanically put my hand under the pillow for my watch, to see what o'clock it was; and then I knew why I was uncomfortable. Indeed, to some who are the elect of misfortune, waking is a kind of daily process of looking upon one's scaffold: however, it is still some consolation if, like poor Chénier, when opposite to his, (we cannot indeed) put our hand on our head, as he did, but on our heart, and say with him,

"Pourtant j'avais quelque chose là!"

for that something never leaves us, even in death; as it is *the us* that continues on into infinity—the deep, murmuring river, that rolls over much that is turbid

and rugged, till it eventually reaches, and is purified in the great ocean of Eternal Light!

For a wonder, I was up and dressed the first that day; for I was in a hurry to place the letter under the stocks, in the closet with the dumb-bells, as that was the *poste restante* which Miss Sharpe had specified. It was the first time I had ever beheld the school-room at early morn, and I must say I have often, before and since, seen views that I admired more; for there is certainly nothing very picturesque in straight rows of green-baize covered benches, rising in their mute spirit of emulation one above the other. Even a Dutch imagination (if there is such a thing) could not have fancied them into sloping banks of verdant moss. Then the great, long, cold-looking table, running down the room, with the cloth laid for breakfast, looking like an interminable plain of snow, with its miniature Alps of blue mugs, to say nothing of the Tyrol of Jung Fraus, that would soon be perceptible; and the three square pieces of bread, upon which butter, like Cardinal de Beaufort, had "died and made no sign;" all of which squares put together, a single *Dent du Midi* might have demolished at a bite. Then the great, high, green fender, imprisoning, as it were, the very elements; and the little, cold, smoky, feeble fire, just lit, not a Promethean-looking spark in the whole grate, any more than in the young ladies whom it was intended to warm. Then, on each side of it, the two dissecting tables of the four teachers, strewed with the

offal of dog's-eared grammars, spelling-books, and abridgments of history; Dr. Young and Mr. Thomson casting a browner horror o'er the whole, with a small prize volume, bound in green and gold, of Cowper, whom, of course, they called *Cow*-per, pronouncing the first syllable emphatically, like the animal of that name; which, after all, was very natural in such a set of calves. Oh! these Concave House pronunciations! Really Miss James should have kept an aurist, to attend *pro*-fessionally, one's poor ears were so *écorchées* with those colloquial butcheries. Among other elegancies of diction, Chaumontelle pears they invariably called Charmontelle pears, because such is the mispronunciation of market-women and gardeners; but to me, who had lived so many years in the paradise of this incomparable fruit, I could not bear to hear mine old familiar friend called such ugly names.

At length I reached the closet, where the dumb-bells, stocks, collars, back-boards, and other instruments of torture, were kept, and there deposited my letter; after which, I returned to the place from whence I came, namely, the dormitory, varying the route, however, by taking the front staircase, instead of the back, the scenery of which was altogether bolder and more picturesque, as from the summit there was a fine view of the front entrance, with the great hall lamp, and a Schneider on one side, with a tolerably good Cuyp on the other.

Should Mr. Murray like to publish this "Hand-

Book of the School-Room," by the two roads of the front and back-stairs, he is perfectly welcome to it; and the beauty of it is, it will do for any and all school-rooms, teachers and pupils, of course, excepted—upon the present company system. "Excursion tickets to Concave House and back, to be had at all the circulating libraries."

It was lucky that I had got up early, and taken the day in time; for it was, in a small way, destined to be an eventful day to me. In the first place, Jemima had kept her word, and got me the chickens, cream, &c.; and as I was still on leave of absence with Helen and Jessy, I stole down about twelve o'clock to the kitchen, where the cook had obligingly abdicated in my favour, taking with her all her great officers of state, and leaving me the coast, that is, the kitchen, clear, with the whole *batterie de cuisine* at my disposal inclusive of the palace stewpan, and Jemima for aide. The first compliment I received from that young lady was:

"Lor! Miss, how nicely and neatly you does it all, no litter, and no mess; and you don't paw and handle the things as *cook* does but I always thought as frigasee was done with cold roast, or biled fowls?"

"No; to be good, the chickens should be raw, and you see, Jemima, I take off all the skin, and only use the wings and breasts for the fricassée, as you call it; the rest I stew down separately, with a little salt,

mace, and lemon-peel, to make the gravy, which I afterwards mix with the cream and the yolk of an egg, beat up till, when stirred over the stove, it becomes as thick and smooth as a custard."

"And no flour, Miss?"

"Not a grain, and the coxcombs are done very gradually, with the gravy; and now, Jemima, give me a loaf of stale bread." I then cut off some thin slices, taking off the crust, and shaping pieces of bread about four inches long, and three broad, into what Jemima called "aces of spades." When my *suprême* was completed, I made Jemima get the omelette pan to fry the *croutons*, but imagine my horror, when she was proceeding to put a great lump of lard! into it for that purpose: "No, no, Jemima, fresh butter: the best butter, and half that quantity."

"Lor! Miss James would faint at the hidear of the best butter for frying bread."

"It is not Miss James's, or I should not take it; but I have a right to do what I like with my own, as Punch says; and I hate the idea of poisoning people with bad wine and bad butter, because they are defended by the sophistry of a sauce." My *plat* completed, Jemima was in an ecstacy of delight, and having given her some of it to taste, she declared it was—

"A dish fit for a king!"

"And so it should be," laughed I, "considering it was done in a royal stew-pan."

"The very look of it would make one hungry again, if one had just dined; and, has I said before, no fuss, no litter, no mess, no nothink; lor! Perkins would jump hout of his hugly skin (and a good thing too) if he seed it; and you don't look a bit red, nor blowsed, Miss, while the other young ladies get their noses as red as capsicums after they have been stooping down their heads a gumming, and a gilding, and a fizgiging, or whatever they calls it, hover them there screens and match stands."

"I don't get red," said I, "because I don't stoop, nor stand over the fire; you must know, Jemima, I'm very proud of being able to cook, but I have no ambition to look like a cook."

"I b'leeve you, Miss; but lor! I always thinks, somehow, that let people do what they will they always looks what they is. Many a madam his stuck up in a drawing-room that would look a deal more in her place by the side of a dripping-pan; for, after all, I thinks it his the hinside, and not the houtside, as makes people."

"No doubt of it, Jemima," I rejoined. "So now that the tray is ready, have the goodness to carry it up stairs, for I'm sure those poor children are starving."

It never does to exult about anything, no matter how laudable, for the moment you do, that spiteful old beldame, Miss Fortune, never fails to give you some practical proof that you are mistaken; and that as sure

as eggs are eggs, hatched and unhatched chickens never make up the same amount, the only two ways, perhaps, of contemplating the same chimera, which are not six of one and half-a-dozen of the other: we all know that we

> "Never loved a tree or flower,
> But 'twas the first to fade away!"

but my disappointments have extended still further, for in the "sweet South," though I used to devote the whole of my energies to the pursuit, I never tried to catch any particular mosquito—

> "But 'twas the first to fly away:
> I never owed a little bill,
> Which they had promised not to send,
> But 'twas the first (and is so still)
> To plague and dun me in the end!"

In continuation of the working out of this system of disappointments and *mécomptes*, scarcely had Jemima placed the tray upon the table, and uncovered the *suprême de volaille*, than while Jessy and Helen were clapping their hands with delight at their unexpected feast, and I was saying: "*that's* what Myneheer Guilderclutchen had for dinner! and having more than even *he* could eat, he has sent you some of it," who should walk in but Miss James, Mademoiselle de Montmorency, and Glauber Rodolphus, come to pay his diurnal *pro*fessional visit. The poor children stood

suddenly still, and trembled, and even I (I confess it) stagnated into a sort of demi-semi state of petrifaction.

"De-lightful odour of dinner here!" said Mr. Perkins, while one nostril of his experienced nose sniffed *en amateur*, and the other *en connoisseur*, the whole machine turning additionally up the while, as if chemically, that is, *pro*fessionally endeavouring to concentrate the volatile vapour of the aroma, that rose from the dish.

"Pray," said Miss James, with her awful "Ahem!" as she folded her arms, advanced slowly towards the table, and began scrutinizing the *supréme*, as if she had been looking down a well, and was afraid of falling in; "pray, may I inquire what this is? I had ordered a boiled scrag of mutton for Miss Penrose and Miss Fane's dinner."

"Yes, Ma'am," replied I, boldly, seeing that the poor children threw all their dependence into one furtive but imploring look at me; "but they wished for chickens."

"*They wished for chickens!* 'pon my word, very pretty; and pray, Miss Sedley, do you suppose I can afford ortolans every time the whole school take it into their heads to wish for them?"

"Of course not, Ma'am, therefore I bought these chickens, and all the other ingredients for this dish."

"Oh, indeed, you bought them, very obliging of you, upon my word; but allow me to ask you, Miss

Sedley, if you think it fair to take up the time of my cook in making such kickshaws to encourage young ladies in the very worst vice they can be guilty of—gluttony." (Oh! Miss James!)

"I did not take up your cook's time, for I dressed that chicken myself."

"No! now you don't say so!" exclaimed Mr. Perkins, stepping up to me with such unfeigned admiration, as he looked from me to the *suprême*, that for a moment I was afraid he was really going to swallow both.

"Oh! Miss Sedley! Miss Sedley! I blush for you!" said Miss James, putting both her hands before her face; "do you want to be taken for a cook?"

"I don't much care if I am, Ma'am; Plautus was nick-named Asinius, or the Ass, because, poor man, he was obliged to turn a mill; but he was not in reality the more of an ass on that account."

"Ah! Miss Sedley, how often have I told you how very indecorous," (or indeckerus, as Miss James pronounced it) "it is in a young *female* to be always quoting those profane Greek and Latin authors, for Plautus was a Greek, was he not, Mr. Perkins?"

"Ye—ye—yaw—yes," roundly asserted Glauber Rodolphus, reckless of the *alibi*, as he kept his large, round, bottled, gooseberry eyes intently, not to say devoutly fixed on the chicken. "Ah! haw! a disciple of Hesculapus."

"And on that account called an ass!" said I.

"Miss Penrose and Miss Fane, you may commence your dinners, and you, Miss Sedley—"

"Stop!" interrupted Mr. Perkins, seizing a spoon and helping himself to a wing with coxcombs and *croutons, ad libitum.* "Stop! allow me just to taste this dish, to see that it is not too rich for my patients."

It was almost too much for my patience as I saw nearly a third of the poor children's dinner vanish into Mr. Perkins' capacious maw, which he actually wadded with bread, his hand serving as a ramrod.

"Huninpeachable!" said he, at length, as the last morsel disappeared.

"But I am sure, Mr. Perkins, you are shocked beyond measure, that any young lady should so far forget herself, as to go down into a kitchen and make a cook of herself!"

"Why," said Mr. Perkins, with a grateful leer at the *suprême,* (for if men *have* any gratitude, it always takes a gastronomic direction, while their affections take a monetary one,) "you must not be too ard on hour little friend here, for consider, my dear Miss James, that hif Miss Miriam did forget herself, hit was to remember her friends; therefore, I must give it has my hopinion, (always, of course, with doo defe-rence to yours), that such being the case, the means justify the hend! I should say, the hend justifies the means."

Miss James sighed, as if she thought so too, but all she said was:

"Ah! Mr. Perkins, you are too indulgent, too kind."

"Can one be so?" *sotto voce'd* Glauber Rodolphus, with a look of maudlin tenderness that gave a sort of gooseberry-fool expression to his eyes. "Hi repeat it, can one be so, where the appiness or the hanger of the fair sex his concerned?" and seeing that the starch in Miss James's cap and collar, were fast melting into an almost fluid state, he added aloud, "and now ave hi your kind permission to make my little hinvitation?"

"Why, really," said Miss James, "I think a young lady who can so degrade herself as to cook a dinner, is not fit afterwards to dine with ladies and gentlemen."

"Some gentlemen think otherwise," said I, pertly, "for Englishmen are the only gentlemen in the world who ever marry their cooks."

"Might do better, certainly—and might do worse," responded Mr. Perkins, sententiously, and then added, with a loud ha! ha! "the worst think hi see hin marrying one's cook his, that hi should be sadly afeard that in that case, the lady would be hapt *to rule the roast!* hin which hevent a usband's authority his sure to *be dished!*"

"Dear me, you *are* such good company! Mr. Perkins," said Miss James, laughing a tittering second

to Glauber Rodolphus's sonorous cachination, while Jessy and Helen seized that opportunity of helping themselves to some more chicken, least Mr. Perkins, after his laugh, might be again tempted, by his professional zeal, to try by a greater experiment, whether the *suprême* was equally good for them, now that it was not quite so hot.

"Then hif you think so," said Mr. Perkins, insinuatingly, in reply to this compliment, "you won't refuse to make me appy to-morrow?"

Poor Miss James's cheek grew a darker drab colour at the *équivoque* of these cruelly tantalizing words.

"Oh! certainly, any thing you wish," faltered Miss James, whereupon Mr. Perkins turned to me, and said, putting his hand before his mouth, as he had done while ramrodding the bread, only now it was certain troublesome ahems that he wanted to keep within bounds:

"Ahem! Miss Sedley; Miss James and Miss Homeny, aving done me the honer to haccept my humble hinvite to honer Seidlitz Lodge to-morrow, September 29th, with their presence, hit being my buth-day, I ave halso ventered to ope for the honor hof the company hof one or two of Miss Jamses poopils, hi should say, her young ladies, oping Miss Sedley, that you will be one hof the two selected, hand Miss Dickens, the hother."

"I'm sure," said I, "I shall be delighted," which was the exact truth, for I could fancy nothing more delicious in the interminable annals of the ridiculous,

than Glauber Rodolphus celebrating his own and every other goose's *jour de fête* at Seidlitz Lodge.

"It is a remarkable coin*si*dence," (coincidence), sighed Miss James, pathetically raising her eyes to the ceiling, as if it knew all about it, "that the 29th of September was also my dear father's birth-day, and though he has now been dead many years, yet I always keep it."

"Most haimiable and dootiful, h'im sure," said Mr. Perkins, taking a solemn "dust to dust" sort of pinch of snuff, while Mademoiselle de Montmorency who had not yet spoken, perceiving the affecting turn the conversation was taking, said to me, pointing to the *suprême:*

"That's what the French call a *Beckamel, ain't it?*"

"No," said I, "this is called a *suprême de volaille,* or *poulet à la Condé;* a *Béchamel* is a mince."

"Oh! you pronounce it *Bécheamel?*"

"*I* don't in particular, but every one does, for it is called after the Marquis de Béchamel, who invented it for Louis Quinze, though if honour went where honour was due, which it seldom does, by the bye, it ought instead of a *Béchamel,* be called a *chat botté,* since Puss in Boots was the first who invented that *plat* for the Marquis de Carabas, when he threatened to cut the reapers into minced-meat, if they did not say all the corn belonged to that illustrious personage.

"Ho! by-the-bye," said Mr. Perkins, "there is to be a great Bible meeting at Amersmith to-morrow;

hand has Mr. Wilberforce his to take the chair, I thought it might be a pleasing recreation to you, and the young ladies, Miss James, hif we went there first, hand give us a happetite for hour dinner beside : for, for my hown part, hi find nothink makes me so ungry has going to church, hand hall that sort of thing."

"Ah!" said Miss James, "it is no doubt that you hunger and thirst after righteousness."

"Hafter hevery think; for, thank Eaven, I ave a hexcellent appetite, though hi injy a very hindifferent state of ealth."

And mechanically Mr. Perkins, in playing with a fork, abstractedly stuck it into the last piece of chicken that lingered in the dish; and the next moment, it found its way (apparently quite of its own accord, and without any compulsion) into his mouth.

Here Jemima came into the room, stuffing her apron into her mouth, to prevent herself laughing, and addressing me, said:

"If you please, Miss, there's a gentleman below; such a funny-looking gentleman," and here she began to giggle afresh, "as wants to see you."

"Who is it?"

"I don't know, Miss; never seed him before."

"But what is he like?"

"Well, raley, Miss," said Jemima, with difficulty suppressing her laughter, "he's egzacly like one of them ere great baboons of he-monkeys, as they calls a wild man of the woods; and such a queer Hirish

servant has he has got with him to take care on him, I spose: for they come in a glass-coach, leastways the monkey hinside, and the man hout."

"But what's his name?"

"Don't know, Miss; he did not say; all he said was, that he come from your aunt, Mrs. Marley, and he wanted to see you. And then he kept hon saying, 'do you see me now?' and I said, 'oh, Lor! yes, Sir; it's himpossible to be hoff seeing on you;' for thinks I to myself, hexcept the hourang outangs at Brook-green fair, I never seed nothink like you before."

"Do you see me now?" being the open Sesame of Mr. Thesmothete Pinchbeck's philosophical treasures, I instantly knew it was he; and thinking he might have brought me a letter from Grace, as he had mentioned my Aunt Marley's name, I felt more anxious to see him than any one ever did, before, or since."

"May I go down?" said I, appealing to Miss James.

"As it is a gentleman, I will accompany you, Miss Sedley, replied that incomparable keeper of our conscience, starching up into battle array. I smiled as I thought of that great non-conductor Pinchbeck being treated *en séducteur;* however, seeing, is believing, and the moment Miss James beheld him, she was convinced that she might with equal safety, and propriety, leave me *en tête-à-tête* with this great philosopher, and return to Mr. Perkins.

"Have you got a letter from my sister for me?" said I in a sort of "stand and deliver" tone, without even asking him how he was, since I saw that he was

the same as ever; but without replying to my anxious inquiries, he began leisurely contemplating me through his block-tin binocles, and then said:

"Ay, the outside is all very well, and very like Mrs. Marley; do you see me now?

"The peerless Marcia towers above her sex!"

as the poet says; but when will your intellect tower above your sex's, as hers does? when will that little head be as full of philosophy as hers, eh?"

"When there is room for any more rubbish in it," said I, laughing; "but, Mr. Pinchbeck, have you a letter from my sister for me, and when are they coming back?"

"Do you see me now? I, that is to say, myself—"

("So I should suppose.")

"thought you might like to take the opportunity of enlightening your mind, as to the elevating principle, which is the moral lever of mankind; and universal benevolence, which is the sun, or rather which ought to be, the sun of our social system. All of which you will hear expounded to-night at the Pig and Whistle Tavern, by Professor Boreall Von Echokant, who takes the chair at the 'Thismothetic Viviparous Society.' As they have done me the honour of calling these meetings after me, and also," added he, remorselessly drawing three green cards out of his pocket, without the slightest glimmering of an answer to my question, "I have brought you tickets of admission."

"Thank you; but, Mr. Pinchbeck, have you got a letter for me?"

"Attention, do you see me now? to the wants and feelings of others being the great point to instil into the minds of all classes; and without a proper distribution of wealth, this attention is impossible, because wants cannot be supplied without money. And it is impossible to cultivate feeling, when people put their hands into their pockets, and feel nothing. Consequently, I, that is to say myself, am about to organize a system by which every individual shall be satisfied; they have only in my system to state what they wish for, and I give it to them."

"For Heaven's sake then, do give me my letter, if you have one for me."

"This," resumed Pinchbeck, still paying no more attention to my request than if it had been the buzzing of some rival blue-bottle, who had droned "question! question!" in passing, "this, you will perceive at once puts an end to envy, hatred, malice, and revenge, because by establishing equality, it annihilates injustice."

"And what," said I, "in your system becomes of the desperate inequalities of intellect, personal appearance, and other advantages, within the gift of Heaven alone; the possession and non-possession of which cause quite as many envies, jealousies, hatreds, vengeances, and disgusts, (if not more) as disparity of fortune, and worldly position?"

"Do you see me now? you are young and foolish, and know nothing about the resources of philosophy, and the omnipotence it possesses to bestow all things that are desirable, or desired."

"Then do, for pity's sake, my good Mr. Pinchbeck, if you have a letter from my sister (which you must have; for I'm sure she would never let you come here without one) give it to me at once; pray do."

"My system," recommenced Pinchbeck, with a furious paroxysm of blinking, but without the slightest notice of my urgent and reiterated appeal, "when I establish it in a large tract of country that I have bought on the banks of the Gullgoose river, will so include, comprehend, and prevent the wishes and wants of all mankind, that no one will want to wish for anything."

"In short," said I, despairing of discovering whether he had or had not a letter for me, "your system appears to be merely the present system inverted; as in the latter, no one wishes to want for anything: but what do you call your system, and who is going out to the Gullgoose with you?"

"At present—do you see me now?—I cannot get any one to go out with me, so that I am going alone."

"In fact, then," interposed I, "your system may be called the solitary system."

"But," resumed Pinchbeck, "that highly enlightened woman, Lady Laura O'Shindy (her lord and master I must do him the justice to say, not making the

slightest opposition), has promised to come out (as soon as there are a sufficient number of the natives caught), to initiate the female portion of the community into those elegant accomplishments of civilization with paper and paint, in which she so much excels. By the bye, there is a striking instance of the triumph of mind over matter; Lady Laura is certainly not physically handsome, and yet she writes me word, that some famous painter in Paris, where she now is, has requested her to sit for one of the figures in an historical picture upon which he is engaged, and which is to be exhibited in the Loover (*Louvre*), but I confess my weakness; do you see me now? Beauty"—

"I do see you now, but I don't see any beauty."

"You are probably going to say," interrupted Pinchbeck," that you don't see any beauty that can be compared with intellectual beauty; that is true, but when both are united, as in the case of your Aunt Marley,—do you see me now?—it makes one feel very queer."

"It makes you look so, at all events," said I.

"Ah, I told your Aunt Marley, that if she would come out to the Gullgoose river, I would at once make her queen. There! how should *you* like to be queen of Gullgooseia?"

"Oh! that would entirely depend upon whether *you* were king," said I, with all the gravity so terrible an idea inspired.

"Do you see me now!" said Pinchbeck, actually

opening his eyes for half a second, and then blinking double tides, "I suspect you are a bit of a quiz, Miss Miriam."

"That is very wrong of you, Mr. Pinchbeck; you should never suspect any one till you have found them out; as I'll take care you shall find me the next time you come," added I, though not aloud.

"And that's your philosophy is it: at least your manner of philosophizing?"

"Oh, me, I have no philosophy, and therefore, never philosophize, except in Pascal's way, as I quite agree with him, that 'Bien philosopher, c'est se moquer de la philosophie;' but how," added I, "did you find your way here?" which being interpreted, meant "when will you find your way back again?"

"Oh, my sister, Mrs. Congreve, is in town, and it so happens that Lady Laura O'Shindy's old servant, Dermot, is living with her; and though he never was in London before, he says he knows it very well, and as I always go about in a carriage for fear of losing my way, I don't find that he ever makes a mistake, for he is always on the box to direct the coachman."

"Dermot here," laughed I, at the idea of his officiating as travelling tutor to a cockney-coachman, "how I should like to see him."

"That you can easily do," said Pinchbeck, walking to the window, and tattooing on one of the panes to attract Dermot's attention, who was at that moment in a reclining attitude on the box, leaning his right elbow

on the roof of the carriage, the hand of which was supporting his cheek, while his hat, which was very much on one side, was ornamented with a gold band about the width of the field of the cloth of gold, and surmounted by a cockade that would (at the high price wheat then was), have made a very respectable sized windmill. His livery consisted of a pepper and salt jacket with brass buttons, on which was engraved a large star for the crest, (doubtless a rocket proper—for Congreve); his waistcoat was broadly striped with red and yellow, and altogether looked so full blown, owing to a tremendous shirt frill, which like other great events, "cast its shadow before," that it might have been mistaken for the prize tulip at an Amsterdam show; his small-clothes were black-velvet, but still as of old, indulging in too great a degree of intimacy with his calves, while his stockings, as usual, evinced no servile imitation of the snows of Siberia, nor were his shoes one whit more polished than a Polar bear.

At first, he did not hear his master's signal, as at that moment he was gesticulating violently with his disengaged arm, and pointing energetically first to the right, then to the left, and then straightforward, apparently taking great pains to explain the topographical intricacies of the *locale* to the coachman, who sat stolidly beside him, without turning an inch; but nevertheless, from under his low, flat-crowned, broad-brimmed hat, a still broader grin was visibly stretching his whole face, and displaying his long gums

and short teeth: and while his own fancy was thus evidently tickled, upon the principle of divide and govern, he was tickling the right ear of the off-horse with the lash of his whip.

Upon Pinchbeck's repeating the signal, Dermot was suddenly electrified into the perpendicular, and favoured his master with a military salute; but no sooner did he perceive me, than his hat was off, bowing in the most furiously, friendly, and at the same time deferential manner.

In another moment, he had jumped from the box, but so precipitately, that his hat fell off in the operation; and there being rather a high wind, and the size of the cockade really acting like the sail of a windmill, it set off as hard as it could go, and Dermot after it, doubling his fist at it, as much as to say, "If I catch you!" but for a long time the beaver seemed determined that he should not, and eluded the vigilance of its pursuer.

I had opened the window to see the chase; and when, at length, the hat was stopped in its headlong course by the roots of a Portugal laurel, and Dermot made a dive at it, and recovered it, he began beating it with his clenched fist, and setting his teeth, as he exclaimed:

"Bad look (luck) to you for a Saxon thafe of a hat I'll tache you to give me de schlip anoder time. Take dat, and dat, and dat; and betther manners to you for de future, you big blackguard of tile, you."

And having belaboured his unconscious victim till it was bulged in all directions, he then attempted to put it on; but finding, from the severe discipline it had undergone, that what should have been outside was now in, and so usurped the legitimate dominions of his crown, he again took it off, and with another thump, said:

"Bad look to you! Now dat you are come back itself, sure dere's not de half of you in it."

At length, meeting the pressure from without, as it always is met, either by nations or individuals, by a struggle from within, Dermot bethought him of transferring some of the thumps to the inside of his hat, which he had hitherto so liberally bestowed on the outside, and so at length restored it (like the Russian Government) to an absolute form. When he entered the hall, I eagerly opened the dining-room door, quite as much with the design of affording Mr. Pinchbeck the means of egress as of *pour parler*-ing with his squire.

"Well, Dermot," said I, "I'm glad Lady Laura got over her displeasure sufficiently to give you a character, and enable you to get another place."

"Och! you shee, Missh," replied Mr. Bawn, diplomatically reversing the positions, so as to make his late mistress the debtor for *his* silence and forbearance, as he winked his right eye, and pulled up his shirt collar, "ave coorse, I never let on the rale state of de cashe at her Leedyship's; because you shee, afther all, wheder

we like it or not, she *ish* Irish—more's de pity—and it would have been a dishgrashe to the country, if I had tould all her invintions for schkining flintsh, and den trying to convart de very schkinsh of the flintsh afterwardsh into summer wear for me, by discharging me, not like a sarvant itshelf, but like a goon (gun), bad look to her! for, ash I said to her, whin I coome down out of de schky by a *meracle*, afther dat lasht blowing up, de nexsht time she had a fanchy for shooting de crowsh, I hoped she wudn't load her fire-arems wid futmen, as dere was no wages cud pay one for dat sort of ting, let alone de hoight of starvation. But whin de mistress I'm now wid, said to me:

"And why did you lave yer last plache?" says she.

"I cudn't stand de blowing up, ma'am," says I, "but mild and quite, as if I didn't want to be hard on de plache; you know, mish.

"Well, but washnt Leedy Laura's a good plache? saysh de misthress, purshisting, for itsh astonishing how inquishitive de quality do be about yer lasht plache whin dey're engaging a sarvint.

"Och! very good, ma'am, says I, for breaking one's shins, by raison of her leedyship's niver allowing a farding's worth of light itself in de hall, or on de schtairs, but a very bad plache for breaking one's fast, ma'am, by raison of de diet being too light entirely for Christians; it might ave done very well for *chimaras*, ma'am—dem tings dat lives on air, for, being used to it, I suppose dese breakquists and dinners of ziphers

and brazes don't give dem de wind on deir schtomachs, ma'am, as dey would uz," says I.

I could not help laughing most heartily at Dermot's mode of concealing Lady Laura's faults, and raising her in public estimation. However, the manner apart, the method was about the same as that generally adopted by the *tact of friends!* whose clumsy defence is the worst species of accusation, as it affects to be armed with the search-warrant of truth; whereas the calumnies of enemies are mere burglaries, at least amenable to the laws, even if not always overtaken by them.

"Mr. Pinchbeck tells me, Dermot, that you know your way about London very well already."

"Och! ash to dat, mish," replied he, this time winking his left eye, hitching up both sides of his unmentionables, and wagging his head, as if performing the Selkirk pantomime of "I'm Monarch of all I survey," "it wud be mighty quare if I didn't, when me parents is istablished in Loonun, and English to boot —dat is, won (one) of dem, at laste, and dat de chafe one—I mane me fader."

"I'm very glad to hear," said I, "that you look upon Jeffs as your father."

"And why wudn't I, mish? Now look at here; shure, if I go and buy a sechcond-hand coat,—well, it musht ave belonged to some other person befoore—dat's sartin; but ash shoon ash I've paid for it, it

belongsh to me; do you take, missh? And in loike manner, sho shoon as Misther Jiffs wash paid down by de parshon, and endorshed by de prashte, to my moder, dat moment I became hish soon, do I had formerly belonged to anoder man; and I may say," concluded he, giving a complacent side-glance to his costume, "that I don't tink he'll find me much de worshe for de wear."

"Do you see me now?" said Pinchbeck, emerging from the dining-room with a large warming-pan of a silver watch in his hand; "I must return as fast as possible to town, for I am to meet Professor Von Echokant at "The Pig and Whistle" at two, and it now wants only a quarter. So good bye, Miss Miriam, for the present—for I shall hope to see you early at the meeting—and who knows but you may make a conquest of some of the younger advocates of the system; for, in spite of philosophy, these young chaps are apt to be caught by a pretty face, as flies are by honey; so there's temptation for you!"

"Which Heaven keep me out of," thought I. I was very fond of fun, it is true, but going to "The Pig and Whistle" for it, was paying rather too dear for one's whistle; but, as I said nothing, Pinchbeck returned to the charge with:

"You'll not be later than seven, will you?"

"Not," said I, "unless something intervenes to prevent me;" fully determined in my own mind that,

that something should be my insuperable objection.

"Well, good bye," said Pinchbeck, stretching out one of his skinny talons.

"Good bye," echoed I; "quick! Dermot, open the carriage door, or Mr. Pinchbeck will be very late at his appointment."

"Ahem! you guv it, sur, did you?" interrogated Dermot, stepping up to Pinchbeck, putting up his right hand open by the side of his mouth as he bent forward towards his master's ear, and elevating his left foot in mid air.

"Eh?—how?—what?" re-demanded the latter.

"Ahem! what you wash to bring, sur," responded Dermot, winking with as much energy as if his eyelids had been playing at marbles with his eye-balls, and had been determined to fillip them out of their sockets.

"What — I — was—to— bring?" repeated Pinchbeck, as leisurely as if all the words had been tortoises punctuated with snails.

"The letthur, sur, ye bid me remind you to bring," cried Dermot, no longer dulcifying in a stage whisper, but this time, roaring like a stentor into the ear of a deaf giant.

"Oh!—ay! the prospectus, you mean, for Professor Von Echokant."

"Divil a bit of the protect us from Professor Von Echokant; it's the letthur I mane, sur—the letthur

Missh Grache bid ye guv to her shister; and dat you bid me remind you to bring; and dat you forgot afther all, and dat I made you sinsible about, when we got fornent de park, and dat we turned back for, and dat I guv ye wid me own hands, so you must have it about you; unless it's stuck in de bog of all dem bothering protectusses dat ye do be cramming your pockets wid."

"So, then, you *have* a letter from Grace for me, after all! For goodness sake, Mr. Pinchbeck, do give it to me directly."

"Do you see me now? I had quite forgotten all about it; pre-occupied as I am,—about the universal wealth and welfare,—of the great human family! I really have no time to think of, or attend to, trifles."

"In other words," said I, as I followed this great philanthropist to the hall table, where he emptied his pannier-like pockets of charts, maps, and plans of the Gullgoose River, and prospectuses of his system for the regeneration of mankind, and redressing the grievances of the human race — occupying several closely-printed sheets of foolscap, with half a quire of blank paper, left for the subscriptions,—*that were to be.* "When persons impose upon themselves the impossible task, Mr. Pinchbeck, of attending to everybody's business, they never have time to attend to any one's; not even their own."

"Ay, ay, the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers," muttered Pinchbeck, still rummaging for

my unfortunate letter, "all individual relief is wrong, —making a charity of what should be right."

"And as you had not even the charity to give it to me, and I have a perfect right to this packet, I shall assert that right," said I, seizing poor Grace's letter from out a chaos of blueish-looking parallelograms, with a rainbow of different-coloured full-blown wafers amongst them directed to

"THESMOTHETE PINCHBECK, Esq.,
"AT MRS. CONGREVE'S,
"BAKER STREET, PORTMAN SQUARE."

and

"PROFESSOR BOREALL VON ECHOKANT,
"PIG AND WHISTLE TAVERN,
"FETTER LANE."

"Ah—well!" said Pinchbeck, with one of his leathern-creaking smiles, "Miss Grace's letter has been in good company, and I hope it will be able to tell you all about the system."

"If it does," said I, really indignant at the way this professor of benevolence and universal philanthropy had so cruelly turned a deaf ear to my anxiety, and nearly lost my letter besides, "I shall give it, in exchange, a quotation from Dr. Johnson, which is quite fresh in my memory, for it was only yesterday that I read it."

"Eh—what's that?" asked Pinchbeck. "I should have thought old Samuel was still the child Samuel, as far as regards the vast development of modern progress, and could have nothing germain to the system."

"On the contrary, it is most exceedingly *à propos* to it; and, indeed, to all the systems and sects now going."

"Ay! is it so? Then let's hear it; and if it is so, I'll make a memorandum of it, for Von Echokant."

"You could not do better," said I. "Doctor Johnson's exhortation is this: he says—'endeavour to clear your mind of cant; it is positively the prime necessity for all men, all women, and all children in these days, who would have their souls live, even feebly, and not die of the detestablest asphyxia as in carbonic vapour, —the more horrible to breathe, the more clear it looks.'"

"Tut, you little goose, cant is only applicable to religious bigotry and intolerance, and has nothing to do with the system."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Pinchbeck, there may be, and is, a cant of benevolence, a cant of liberality, a cant of justice, a cant of honour, a cant of respectability, a cant of morality (the commonest of all, by the bye), a cant of talent, a cant of patriotism, a cant of loyalty, a cant of simplicity, a cant of independence, a cant of toleration (the cant most in vogue with the intolerant or sectarians), a cant of forbearance, when

persons know that 'tis *they* who are in the wrong, and to stir in a matter would be to clearly establish that fact. In short, there is a cant in everything, even to the cant of affecting to have none !"

(For I have since lived to discover cant is the *locus criminis* of England.)

At length, thank heaven ! the "glass coach," as Jemima called it, drove off with the great philanthropist, Dermot jumping up behind with a *pas de zéphyr,* to show how perfectly *au fait* he was to his footmanic capacity, and vociferating with a sort of theatrical loudness and brevity :

"DE PIG AND ——,"

for the last word he did not utter, but whistled; at which the coachman, with the stolid face, short teeth, and long gums, was again melting away into a broad grin, like a frost wreath in a bright sun, while the horses, seeming to consider this *sul aria* serenade of Mr. Bawns as an especial note of encouragement to them, set off at a brisk pace. I was sorry after the vehicle, that carried Pinchbeck and his philanthropy had driven off, that I had not eased my mind by asking him if he happened in any way to be related to Beccaria, the Italian, who had written so strenuously and pathetically against the punishment of death, as Mademoiselle de Guilleragues had told us a charming little anecdote of him, almost worthy of the universal

benevolence of the great Thesmothete. It appears that as soon as Beccaria's book was out, while correcting the press for the second edition, his servant stole his watch, for which his illustrious master, no doubt as a running commentary on his own work, exerted all his energies to get the delinquent hanged! and (for what will not perseverance in a good cause achieve?) ultimately succeeded!

I returned to the dining-room, and closing the door hastily, tore open Grace's letter. Like all things human, its tissue was of a mingled yarn, in which the dark threads predominated. Her first news was of Bloom Belzoni, but even this was second-hand; through Mlle. de Guilleragues, who wrote that, she thought, if we did not go to Paris that year, we should have little chance of seeing her another; for like one of those beautiful but fragile white lilies, whose life seems to be light, and which seldom outlive a summer's day, she was fading fast; and Belzoni was so broken also, that he did not seem as if he would be long after her. "She is always glad to see me," added Mademoiselle de Guilleragues; "always affectionate in her inquiries for you both. But it is evident she has some terrible weight at her heart, which she will not lift up for one moment, that one might judge how far it had eaten into it, and see if there was any remedy. In one so gentle, and amenable to sympathy on all other points, this pertinacious silence savours more of the ice-bolt of death, than of one of the mysteries of life, except indeed

it be love; if so, like the Jupiter of Euripides, I must say:

"Of thee, Love, (not Jupiter) I know nothing but the name!"

Of love neither did I then know anything but the name; yet who can live through seventeen summers, and as many winters, and not know that even without love, in every heart there are abysses

"Where deep calleth unto deep,"

and are heard by none but God, and have no answer save their own echoes. Poor Bloom! I gave you plenty of tears; one is so prodigal of them in youth, and never thinks what need one will have of them for oneself in after-life. Grace then went on to say, that she was exceedingly unhappy on more than one account.

"In the first place," said she, "my poor aunts are both dreadfully out of humour, especially Aunt Marley, who says she is sacrificing her life for our interests, and losing everything. In order to understand this, you must know that she is much annoyed at her Paris scheme having been so long retarded, and almost frantic at Madame de Staël having slipped through her fingers by dying last year. I think my Aunt Marley deems it unphilosophical of *la Femme forte de l'écriture*, as dear old Guilleragues used to call La Baronne, but an impertinent friend of mine (also a great friend of

Göthe's) who could not bear Madame de Staël, says that she talked the world to sleep, and so, in self-defence, was obliged to go asleep too, only, that unfortunately, this sleep, like her conversation, will be eternal. However, Aunt Marley is so cut up about it, that when we do go to Paris, she says she doubts if she shall present her letters to Madame Récamier, as she would not give a straw to see a mere beauty. Not so I; and I only wish that Madame Tallien was still to be seen; also, besides the Guilleragues, who is an *habituée* at *l'Abbaye aux Bois,* says Madame Récamier, *c'est la fascination incarnée.* I have a great deal to tell you, dearest Mirry, and I scarcely know how to tell it to you, for it is all about myself. So first I will say, what I know concerns you equally; which is, how unhappy I have been, that during the whole time we have been in Dublin, I have in vain implored Aunt Marley to let me go and see poor papa; it is not only so unnatural, but so wrong, to be within a hundred and twenty miles of a parent, and not to do so; not from affection, for we cannot love what we do not know, but from a mere sense of right: it is a cruel position to be in: *all false positions are cruel,* and when they are prolonged, they not only accumulate, but worse still, I feel convinced there is no getting out of them; and even if we fancy we do so for a time, their seed, like the dragon's teeth, are sure to spring up, armed *cap-à-pie* against us, when we least expect it. Even when I pray for my poor father, the only

image the word "father" conjures up to me, is that of dear Uncle Paulett. I would not, if I could, love him less, but I certainly ought to love my poor father more: and yet that I find impossible, dear Mirry. If you were in my place, I know you would act so much more nobly—that is, so much more rightly—thinking it your duty to go to papa, I am sure no earthly power would prevent your doing so; you have so much more moral courage than I have—you always had; and what as a child used to be called goodness and obedience in me, I begin to think was nothing more than a culpable weakness, which can be swayed by every breath—an excellent qualification for a weathercock, but by no means desirable in a woman.

"For the last three months, Papa has refused to answer Aunt Marley's letters, she had so plagued him about this Gloucestershire property, which he has told her, over and over again, he has irrevocably given to, and cannot take from, Mrs. Penrose; so now it is decided that the day after to-morrow we are to make a descent upon Castle Sedley. Oh, Miriam! how my heart beats at the name of the poor old place! of which I have a vague, but painful recollection, and, though I had not the courage to do as I ought to have done, and as you would have done, yet don't think I am a flint, for the idea of invading the home of one's childhood, and meeting one's father, like a hired Swiss in a hostile army, instead of—if not an affectionate, at least a dutiful child—is too painful; being another galling link of

that chain of circumstances that has been forged for us.

"I shall not, as you may suppose, seal this packet till after the siege of Castle Sedley; and, lest in my greater sins, I should forget my lesser ones, I here read my recantation, and will never call poor old Pinchbeck a bore again (whatever I may think), as he has promised to give this into your hands, which is a piece of special Providence, as it is past franking, and would ruin you in postage. And now, at last, to tell you about myself, which I know, my own dear, kind, true-hearted little sister, will interest you quite as much—not to say more—than if it were about yourself. Mirry, don't blush, but I'm in love!—don't faint: but it's with a Frenchman; oh! but it's only in his manners that he is French, and they are perfection, and as intellect is of no sex, so neither are hearts, I mean *des cœurs d'or* of any country. We met him at the Castle: he is attached to the French Embassy in London, and is making a tour in this country. Everything he does he does well, even to loving me, or, rather, *that* he does best of all. The way he first came to think about me, was hearing me sing that romance of "Velléda," which you know is a sort of *scena*. He says he would have been surprised in England, and was still more so in Ireland, to hear a girl of nineteen sing with so much expression, and pronounce French so perfectly. I rather suspect it was the latter, for—

"Peut-être on aime mieux, quand on sait bien le dire."

"He has great interest with the reigning powers at the Tuileries, and hopes to be sent as *chargé d'affaires* to Dresden in another year, which I should like amazingly; but I see your impatience, you want to know his name, it is Eugène de Maïllepré—he is very handsome (really so I mean, not only in my estimation) for he is called the handsome Comte de Maïllepré. In knowledge, he is a perfect Erasmus—in wit *à l'infidélité près*—a second Voltaire, and lest you should think that partiality is the author of this sketch, here is a compliment Lord C—— paid him the other evening—a tolerable judge you will allow, he himself being *rompu à la politique de l'Europe.*

"'Monsieur de Maïllepré,' said he, 'appears to me to be a sort of diplomatic essence *de mille génies,* for he has all the prompt firmness of Cardinal de Richelieu, which in a dilemma enables him at once to make up his mind, and yet to decide almost intuitively upon the wisest course, without however being at all deficient in the *finesse,* and subtlety of Mazarin, to illude a decision if necessary; while what might be the factious facility or mobility of Cardinal de Retz, is counterpoised by a broad dash of the magnificent and chivalric gallantry of that political nullity, Cardinal de Rohan; but best of all, these brilliant talents are set and bound in that solid and golden maxim of the Duke of Alba: that there is no such fatal error in diplomacy as to think it necessary always to deceive.'

"He says (Eugène—not Lord C——), that he is

very fond of England; but I suspect it is after the Abbé Grégoire's fashion, who said it would be the first country in the world, if it had but cooks and sunshine! the greatest problem he says, he has found in the country, and one he cannot solve, is, *les jeunes misses!* Their freedom of speech and manner astound him; and at the same time, their total ignorance and inanity equally astonish him; he is pleased to be surprised also, though he is too well-bred to use the word—but substitutes *charmé* and *ravi* in its stead, that I am tolerably well read in the past and present literature of Europe, and possess a sufficient quantum of general information, without which there can be no such thing as conversation. I explained the mystery to him by telling him, that for the little I did know, I was indebted to a countrywoman of his, for as Boileau truly said:

"'One learns more from authors* than from their books, and for the same reason we learn infinitely more from the persons who teach us, than from the

* There is no rule without an exception: for there are authors from whose books you may learn something; the said books being a compilation of other people's ideas strung together—for the family of the Borrow-wits is by no means confined to Mr. Planché's charming *petite comédie* of "My Heart's Idol," or to Charles Mathews' inimitable acting. And authors there are, with whom, for one's sins, one may be thrown into frequent contact (for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth), and yet never by accident stumble upon an idea, or learn anything from them—no, not even to be resigned to one's fate!

books by which they teach us; but then they can impart but what is in them, and if there is nothing in them, out of nothing—nothing comes.' Monsieur de Maïllepré is determined to go to papa to ask his consent, for he fears a letter laden with the atmospheric influences of my aunts would meet with no attention; to the latter, therefore, we have said nothing, as we fear that they would either from some caprice not give their consent, or else (whichever quarter their tempers might happen to be in at the time) insist upon our marrying immediately without even apprizing my father, and this you may suppose nothing would induce me to do. But all this concealment, or rather want of any natural protector to whom to appeal, and in whom to confide, makes me feel very wretched. My poor Miriam, ours is a cruel, and I should think, or at least hope, an almost unique position; our affections from the first cut off and turned out of their natural channel, and then again severed from all the courses into which they had flowed.

"Ah! if I marry, you will no longer be without a *real home*, Mirry, for Eugène already loves you; and then we will coax dear Uncle Paulett to come and live entirely with us, and we shall be *so happy!* and we'll ask poor papa to come too, if he likes; at all events, then we may go and see him. Ah! Mirry, you would have loved Eugène if you had seen the expression of his face, and heard the tone of his voice, when I told

him I had nothing, and that my father had either run through or given away everything. He took my hand, and kissing it very respectfully, (for he is so respectful to me, and that is one thing that makes me love him), he said: 'He has not given *you* away, and it is you I want; don't say you have nothing when you have my heart and soul—or I shall think you do not value them; and yet they are the most precious things any one can give, or receive.' Never shall I forget the expression of noble and generous goodness in his fine face, and the deep, pure love, that trembled in his voice when he said: 'C'est toi! seulement toi! est toujours toi! que je veux!' Oh! how selfish this love, this *égoïsme à deux,* as Madame de Staël truly called it, makes one, I am forgetting all the other marriages that are, and are not to be. One thing that makes my poor Aunt Marley so additionally intractable and impracticable at this moment is, that just as she had made up her mind to be Duchesse de Bouillon, or rather to have a *tabouret à la cour,* and had written to the Duc to say that she was ready to reward his constancy, and contemplate marriage under the new phase of a ducal, nay, a royal, ducal coronet; not doubting that there might be a royal road, even to *that* road to ruin. He did not, it is true, do as Leibnitz did, who at sixty, proposed for a young lady, but was put off till the lady could make up her mind: and when she at last did so, in his favour, said:—'I thank you, Madam,

but I have now changed mine.'—but the poor old man merely wrote these few words: 'Helas! chère belle, il est trop tard. Votre dévoué

"'PHIL—'

"But he could not finish the signature as Caumartin, his valet, who forwarded these last words, says that the pen dropped from his hand, and he sank back lifeless in his chair—that wicked wit, M. de Maillepré, glancing at my Aunt Marley when the news arrived, whispered me,—'*Pauvre cher Duc, il est mort d'un mariage rentré!*' Now for another romance, differing thank heaven! from the beaten track of the Minerva Press. Captain Dapperwit, you remember, *le beau* Dapperwit, the Bayard of aides-de-camp, *sans peur*—except of Lady Laura O'Shindy, and *sans reproche* save from my Aunt Bell, for not marrying her; well, as you know, he proposed for Miss Leah Abraham, and, like a *tyro* in the black art invoking evil spirits, was mortally frightened when he had done it—but Mercury, that god of thieves, (from larceners down to lovers) watched over him, and in due time, instead of the dreaded acceptance of his *billet doux*, it was in a very dignified manner returned to him, protested!

"Oh! the mysterious re-actions of the paphion plague, commonly called love; it differs widely from the other, inasmuch as it is scarcely, if ever fatal, and often breaks out, independently even of money, clothes, or contagion, and so it was with the doomed Dapperwit.

So charmed, and agreeably surprised was he by Miss Leah Abraham's refusal, and the self-respect that it evinced, as well as the convincing proof that it was, of her non-participation in all Lady Laura's coarse, and clumsy plots, that he actually set about falling in love with her in good earnest; and as truth is always sure to prevail in the end (though it unfortunately travels by a *very slow coach*), they are now actually married, and I understand as happy as the day is long. I don't mean now, that the days are shortening, but even in June, when they were at the longest. Fiametta is, I hear from Mademoiselle de Guilleragues, engaged to some Irish Peer in Paris, but from her way of spelling the name, I cannot make out to whom; however, I am surprised at the news, as I always fancied she and Philip Vavasour were in love with each other, as far as either of them could be in love; but I suppose they were only in vanity with each other, which so many people mistake for love. No doubt because they both make people so thoroughly satisfied with themselves, and one more; namely, the whole world.

"They are not to be married till April I hear, Fia and her *fiancé*, and it is to take place in London. I suppose I need not tell you, that both my aunts are as irate at the match, as if the intended bridegroom, whom they have never seen, had been their own especial property. Burglariously absconded with by Fiametta, Aunt Bell's wit on the occasion is, that all

Irish barons should have potatoes instead of balls in their coronets; and all Irish earls, potatoe-blossoms, instead of strawberry-leaves; but I hear the potatoe, or blossom, in question, for I don't know which it is yet, according to Bell's heraldry, has made immense settlements upon his bride elect; and so I suppose it is the cap of maintenance, or jointure, that has tempted Fia, as I hear the lover is neither young nor handsome, amiable, nor clever; however, so it ever has been, is, and will be, world without end—Amen.

"Do you see much of Mr. and Miss Waltham? does Lady Plantagenet continue kind? Are Ladies Fanny, and Lucy growing up as lovely as they promised to be? and have you seen anything of Lord Frederick? I suppose were he to show his handsome face at 'Concave House,' wholesale hysterics would be the result, and Glauber Rodolphus would have to divide, and sub-divide himself into infinitesimal *pro*fessional grains. Is little Helen Penrose still at school? If so, my best love, and a kiss to her. Do you still act as quarterly reviewer to that deep-red, though not even light-blue young lady, Miss Sherwood, when every three months she bestows on you a *writership to India?*

"Is the Margravine in England? and has she ever been to see you? I am curious as a point of natural history (of which Buffon makes no mention) to know if she still wards off rheumatism with "riggadoons," repels the advances of time (the only ones made to her

now) with theatricals, and consigns all thoughts of eternity to the dead letter office of eternal display. Few indeed 'know how to grow old gracefully;' but as times go, it is a sort of negative virtue when people don't do so disgracefully. What a string of questions for you to answer; and now to give you breathing time, in order that you *may* answer them, I shall say good bye, dearest Mirry, till after the eventful invasion of 'our fathers' halls,' which haunts me like a nightmare, 'priez pour moi, pour toi, pour lui! Oh! priez bien pour lui, chère petite sœur.'"

"Castle Sedley, in the nursery!
"The poor old nursery Miriam,
"September 13th, 1818.

"Just nine years and three weeks from the night —the stormy night—on which we left it.

"My father is gone, Mirry; no one knows where; he heard (so old Sullivan, the gardener, says) of my aunt's intention of coming, and he and Tom Lutron (who was dining with him) did not, as Sullivan expresses it, 'even stay to finish the wine in their glasses, let alone that in the bottles,' and set off that moment, Maurice following the next day with their luggage; but whither; Sullivan did not know, or at least would not tell, though I rather think it is the former, as I did all I could to make him tell me; and the poor fellow cried so bitterly, that I am sure he would have told me had he known. My poor father! he little

knows, or alas! has any reason to suppose, how I feel for him. I think had I no more feeling than the rocks beneath these windows, the eternal lashing of this maniac sea (so different from the calm, blue, sapphire waves of dear ——) would stir up an equal tempest in my heart; but, as it is, this abomination of desolation sharpens my wretchedness into so keen an edge, that it is almost insupportable.

"You remember the old Irish harp in the hall—at least we both fancy we remember it, from Nelly's constant descriptions—and the old bugle bed-hangings in my poor father's room, too! Well, last night when we arrived, the high equinoxial winds at the front hall door blew open an opposite door at the back; the elements actually made a rush for it, like two conflicting legions of an infernal army. Never, if I live to be a hundred—which Heaven in its mercy forbid—shall I forget the unearthly shriek (for no other word will express it) that issued from that old half-strung harp; nothing I have ever read, in the most horrible of German horrors, could be compared to it; it was as if some unshrived soul of other times, after having been hunted by the arch-fiend through countless ages, had been overtaken by him at last, and driven from out its sole remaining place of refuge! As the doors were shut, the last remaining brass chord snapped with a dull heavy sound, and then all was fearfully silent within—that death-like silence which, from its un-

fathomable intensity, is ten times more appalling than the loudest crash.

"'The poor Masther! that was *his* knell. God rest his sowl, any how! for it's little rest they gave his body,' said old Sullivan, passing the back of his horny hand across his eyes. 'What do you mean, Sullivan?' said I. 'It's not what I mane, Miss Grace—God bless you and all orphans this night!—but the saying's as ould as the harp sure.'

"'What saying, Sullivan.'

"'Why, that when the last string of that harp snapped, the last of the Sedleys in the male line would soon follow; and it's little good that females can do for an esthate, by raison of every one trampling on them, as if they were part of the soil; and only there for that purpose.' Oh, Mirry! I felt so wicked, so cruel, that if I had then known were our poor father was, not all the aunts on earth could have prevented me going to him, even had I had no other conveyance than to cling to the wings of that dreadful storm, and let it sweep me along.

"We went into the dining-room. There was the table, with the half-drained glasses, a pear half-peeled, on one plate, some chestnuts on another, and a newspaper, and the back of a letter beside it; in fact, everything just as if the recent occupants had fled from the overwhelmings of an earthquake. A moral earthquake it certainly is; and these are the worst;

for bricks and stones may be re-constructed, but the inner world, once thoroughly uprooted and overwhelmed, never can be, however brightly the sun may at length burst forth again above the ruin; and however new interests may build up fresh superstructures on the former site, nay, they may be even greater and more enduring.

"*But they are not the same!* and the legend of the past wreck murmurs like a ceaseless sigh through every future scene.

"Nothing can give you a better idea of the disorderly, comfortless tag-rag of an Irish *ménage*, than that in the long interval of four-and-twenty hours these things should be left unremoved. But Maurice had followed my father; and all the rest of the servants, maids included—(for one had to be caught to light fires for us) were *weirestrewing about the village, at the masthers being druv out of house and home, by the shisthers-in-law of him coming back—more wash de pity—afther nine years' pace and quietness.*

"However, the mute reproaches of the deserted dining-room were not without effect. There is, indeed, an eloquence in the appeal of inanimate objects which must be answered by feelings, and not words. Even my aunts burst into tears, as they sank into a chair; and I will do them the justice to believe that they were not all tears of temper.

"When Biddy Carrol, misnomered 'the housemaid,' was at length caught, fires were lighted; I say

misnomered; for a house-maid is a person who takes care of, and looks after a house; and this poor house has evidently had no one, for many a long day, to take care of or look after it. I asked her to show me the way to the nursery. She said it was locked up, and the masther always kep the kay; but that Angus Troil, the huntsman, knew where he kep it, and she would get it from him. She did so—and, oh, Mirry! no description that I can give you, can convey to you even the most remote idea of the scene that presented itself to me, upon the door being opened. In the first place, upon the approach of the light, a whole colony of bats, which had doubtless been in quiet possession for years, made for the broad, old chimney, where, in attempting to eject two owls, they were met with due resistance. At length, thanks to Biddy's energetic exertions, in flourishing her check-apron in all directions, and vociferating, 'Whist! out of dat, ye devils! Ye can't do widout a nursery, forsooth! Maybe it's lading strings and schpelling-books yez will be afther wanting next.'

"The noise they made in ultimately effecting their escape up the chimney, was truly elfin and witch-like, though certainly not witching. When the room was at length cleared, I had space to take an inventory of its horrors, there were not only the very ashes in the grate as we had left them the night we were carried off, and launched on that stormy sea, but everything as it had been left; the ashes it is true were now cold

and frozen, our cots had the bed-clothes turned down —only more discoloured by thick layers of dust, with that greyish, greenish, mouldering hue—like grave-clothes that have been long buried—under your cot, Mirry, for Biddy told me yours was the one next the wall, were a little pair of red shoes—poor little shoes! I excavated them from the pile of dust in which they were embedded, and have kept them.

"I also picked up, near your bed, a little poplar-tree, that I remember perfectly belonging to a box of toys which you had, and at the foot of my cot lay an old spelling-book with woodcuts, and under the one of the 'Fox and the Grapes,' I had scrawled, according to your directions, 'Poor Master Fox!' for you know you always *would* have it that the fox in all Æsop's Fables was very ill-used, till it came to his making use of the goat's horns to get himself out of the well, and then leaving the poor goat to be drowned, when you not only gave him up, but ever after used to stick pins in his picture, when you came to it. An old black bonnet (discovered to be black after the dust was shovelled away from it) was hanging upon a peg: it was Nelly's: there could be no doubt of *that*, for the likeness to this day is striking, so much so, that I every moment expected to hear it speak, and announce, what really was the fact, namely, '*that the back was dropping out of it!*'

"As a suitable accompaniment to the desecration of this primitive temple of our household goods, the little

lozenge-shaped panes were rattling in their leaden casements, as I perfectly remember their doing when we were children, and Nelly used to threaten us with mermaids, syrens, and sea monsters; the mermaids and syrens were still as far away as ever, but the monsters were near at hand, if one might judge by the fearful imprecations the infuriated waves seemed to be hurling against the rocks, and the low hoarse moan that issued from the latter occasionally bursting into the giant agony of a loud yell, as the wind howled round the solitary turret. Altogether, I felt as I could imagine a disembodied, but certainly not beatified, spirit, feeling could it have the power of contemplating the perishing and insentient fleshly tenement it had for ever quitted, not, however, without a pitying sigh of self-exculpation, that no wonder the immortal machinery had worked badly and imperfectly, when so clogged.

"Taking the little shoes, the palm-tree, and the spelling-book with me, I left this sepulchre of our childhood, telling Biddy to have it cleared out, and duly annointed with soap and water, and purified by fire, against the next day, which she has accordingly done, and I am again re-installed here, writing to you, dear Mirry; my conscience half reproaching me for sharing my misery with you at such a distance; and yet I know by myself that where one sincerely loves, it is the heart of what we love that I covet, no matter what's in it, we'd rather, certainly for their sakes, that

it was filled with hope and gladness, instead of sorrow and despondency; still, weal or woe,

> "Is but the guinea stamp,
> The heart's the heart for a' that!"

which is I'm sure what Burns meant when he wrote the line. The mention of Burns reminds me to tell you of the only live author I have ever yet seen, with the exception of poor little Campbell, whom though Heaven only knows, he ought to be hugely grateful for the disproportionately large bouquet of bays awarded him for that very respectable prize poem of his, "The Pleasures of Hope;" yet he has made such a plantation of nettles for himself, with his envy of the chaplets of Byron, Moore, and Rogers, that his eternal whinings never came up to my ideas of an author, and still less of a poet, who, like the device on Alcibiades' shield, should eschew all the emblems of vulgar warfare, and resolve himself into the most omnipotent of all the gods, in the smallest and most concentrated compass, namely, a cupid grasping a thunderbolt. This myth, I take it, Lord Byron has realized; for in the loudest thunders which he wrests from Olympus, the Graces still play around the electric fluid of his tempests, and at his command, gird the terrible with the magic cestus of the beautiful; whereas, the endless irritation caused by the chronic nettle-rash poor Campbell's vanity is always suffering from, makes one long when

he is snivelling sentiment to recommend him snake-root, as being the best antidote to that troublesome complaint, which is also the cause, I suppose, of his wearing that horrible scratch-wig.

"But to return to my other live author, (whom I am going to tell you about, in the hope of neutralizing in some degree the pain I know this letter will occasion you): it is that extraordinary man, Maturin, the author of 'Bertram,' and 'The Universe;' (the latter however, is far from being a stereotype edition of the great original work). He certainly is a man of genius, but I make use of the word extraordinary more in reference to his appearance than to his mind; for he dresses oddly, that is, melodramatically, and dances more oddly, and far more inveterately still, as you may suppose when I tell you, that in Dublin his *sobriquet* is the Archbishop of Quadrilles; however, he has one cardinal virtue, (though not included amongst them), namely, gratitude; for he is most grateful to Lord Byron for the generous and zealous sincerity with which the latter has tried to promote his literary career, and the pecuniary interests arising therefrom; but this, as Maturin truly says, Lord Byron does by every talent, great or small, that comes across his wide path; for it is only your farthing rushlights of literature, or your base metal reflectors, that send forth borrowed light, who think they cannot shine unless they extinguish all others.

"I like him too, for his being so enthusiastically

indignant at the cold-blooded hypocrisy of the lapidation poor Lord Byron has undergone from the Anglo-Saxon Pharisees. Poor Byron! the Marital St. Stephen! as he calls him; for as he truly says, Lord Byron's greatest fault is making himself out worse than he is; but even judging him by this exaggerated and distorted standard, the sentence past on him, and the punishment inflicted upon him at the bar of English public opinion, would be ludicrous, if it were not infamous, from the *uniqueness* of its injustice.

"'In England, where a husband may commit every crime with impunity, (not to say applause), even to those of which the law is supposed to take the most cognizance, view it in which light I will,' continued Maturin, 'I cannot understand it; for when we recollect that marriage is for life, and consider the arsenal of authorized offensive and oppressive weapons that husbands have at their command for the whole of that long and unequal warfare, surely no wife, comparatively speaking, could have suffered enough to speak of, in ten months, and hence no doubt, Lady Byron's silence; but the fact is, Lord Byron was not mean enough to be a thoroughly bad husband, for to attain to that inverse pinnacle of perfection, a man must be both a liar and a coward, and he is neither: on the contrary, he is too honest; and whether the father of his own actions or not, is always their godfather. Had he turned his wife out of house and home, hunted and calumniated her through the world,

separated her from her child, and poisoned that child into an unnatural monster against her, kept her fortune, and open house with it to entertain virtue's moral umpire—the world! not exposed the turpitudes of English society, that is, of the *haute volée,* or summit of it, which arrogates to itself the title of society *par excellence;* all these things had he done, or not done, would he even now, at the eleventh hour, wheel about and reap rich harvests from the wide spread fields of cant, gleaning hackneyed moral axioms and fine sentiments from popular and esteemed authors, so as to suit the national craving for twaddle, he might in reality *be* with impunity the monster which he is now paying so dearly for having the unmerited reputation of being.

"'But he has acted, and is acting foolishly in staying abroad; for, like the hunted beaver in the fable, by flying, and yet flinging to his pursuers that valuable portion of him which they alone cared to destroy, in order to render it serviceable to themselves, namely his reputation, he has inflicted upon himself a wound that will rankle and hurry him to his grave, and every murmur he utters only aggravates the evil, for the sympathy of the British public seems to have been cast in the same mould as the laws of the Spanish Inquisition, by which it was decreed an additional treason, and made the subject of a fresh criminal indictment, if the victim presumed to utter a complaint; for the English being a commercial people, and tears, injuries,

and injustice not being negotiable though justice is they do not comprehend, and consequently do not tolerate them: whereas, pounds, shillings, and pence are not only clearly but tangibly demonstrative to the concrete capacity of the British public, and therefore whichever, or whoever secures and retains these, is always right in law, lenity, and public opinion.' I quite loved the man for his zeal and his enthusiasm, the more so, that M. de Maillepré told me the other day, that with the Greeks, the word enthusiasm meant God within us!—and I certainly think there can be nothing God-like in us without it, as it appears to me to be the sublimated and essential spirit of truth.

"I don't mean to say, that that which we are enthusiastic about is always true; but I do say, that *we* must be pre-eminently true before we can be enthusiastic, for neither doubt nor hypocrisy ever yet engendered enthusiasm.

"Maturin also told me, that there was a noble review in a last year's number of the 'Quarterly' (No. 31, I think he said), of Lord Byron, written by Walter Scott, whom I do love for that same, more even than for all his delightful tales; after all, as fame is their object (I mean good fame), what fools authors are, not to be really as noble and as great as one likes to fancy them—for one is sure, even though they be dead and buried some hundred years, to go prying and poking into *their realities;* and how soon alas! too

many of the enchanted heroes turn into swine at the touch of this Ethurial's spear.

"As children, don't you remember, Mirry, how we doated on Goldsmith and Burke—not on account of their writings which we could not then appreciate, but because of the endless traits of goodness dear Uncle Paulett used to tell us of them both. To this day, *Je me gendarme!* if I hear Boileau sneered at for a mere satirist, because of the many generous and noble things he did disinterestedly and unostentatiously to save his friends—ay, and even his enemies: whereas, Voltaire with all the genius which he most unquestionably possessed, I allow on all occasions to be thrown quietly to the lions, for his intense meanness—I mean avarice (as he had the other sort, too), always floats on the surface of my memory; and I see him in imagination lending his money at usurious interest only to the Villars, Destaings, Guelriants, Lezans, Brézés, Richelieus and other magnates, and not even to them, without running over all Paris to ascertain in every possible way that their security was valid.

"Then again I see him at Potsdam, where he was allowed two wax lights, and two pounds of sugar a-day, with tea, coffee, and chocolate in proportion, all of which he sold; and then nobly kept running in and out of the King's apartments of a night, under the pretext of wanting this, that, and the other, and always carrying off a wax-light, if not two, which were

never sent back, but went to swell the packets for sales! And still more plainly do I see him borrowing the poor banker's clerk's coat of sables, to save his own purse the outlay for a fortnight's court-mourning, and it being 'a world too wide' for his poor shrunken, wizen figure—having it taken in, and sent back to the poor clerk at the end of the term, who had every reason to mourn, his coat being so small, that he could not again put it on; and it is by the light of these stolen candles (for which a poor lackey would have been discharged) and the contracted measure of that borrowed coat that I judge him,—despite all your printed greatness, and the world-wide echoes of your name, Marie, François, Arouet de Voltaire. Even Luther whom it pleases a certain portion of posterity to call 'The father of the Reformation!' Harry the Eighth of course being the *husband of it;* even Luther, I say, by the showing of his own letters, I cannot think a good man; and yet they are the only fair standards to judge him by, being the only sure footing for one's opinion between the two headlong currents of undue censure, and undue praise, which have floated his name, like a hostile fleet, down to the defenceless shores of posterity. I send you as a recompense for this long letter, and the melancholy tidings it contains, 'The Tales of my Landlord,' not by Pinchbeck, however, lest in his strange notions of the 'Distribution of Wealth' he should, in their stead, present you with that immortal quarto, flanked by his recent

duodecimo, of 'The Glories of the Gullgoose River,' but by Lord C——, who goes in a day or two, and who kindly promised to take them for me, before we left Dublin. I should not be surprised if he took them to you himself. I made him laugh so much about La Donna—not Di Garbo, but De *Gaby*, (Anglice Miss James)—and Glauber Rodolphus: there's a name to shed one's blood for! as he made you do, poor child, in your last fever!

"I know I need not tell you to let me know instantly if papa should write to you: he may do so, for you were ever his favourite, Mirry—naturally enough, for you always had the courage to write to him from yourself, and not according to my aunt's geometrical dictation; whereas I, with my usual culpable cowardice, which that superannuated noodle, the World, is pleased to denominate 'gentleness and docility'—I never dared to venture an inch beyond the standing orders of the reigning powers; but I mean to reform—Heaven only grant, that like most reformations, it may not arrive too late! but Eugène has convinced me, that there can be no good in persons of weak character, for they never have the courage to say or do what is right, however they may feel the inclination; and there is a marked line of duty for every one—which, however, like all other rules, has its exceptions: for instance, it is the duty of every child to obey its parents; but certainly not if those parents command them to do anything contrary to the laws of God.

And that mother would not only be a bad woman indeed, but a vile, bad parent, who could set her child against its father, however wicked that father might be; and though the law makes a father's authority omnipotent, yet the man who could be so heartlessly villanous as to set a child against its mother would not deserve, and ought not to have, the obedience of his children upon that point, because such cruelty is contrary to the law of nature and of God. How much more culpable then in me to have allowed myself to be influenced into being unnatural and undutiful by mere aunts, to whom even that monstrous fallacy and great social deformity, the law, as it now exists, does not delegate any warping authority !

"But as gymnastics strengthen and develop the body, so being much with great minds, and true and straightforward natures, expand and fortify the character. Don't despair of me, then, Mirry, for I cannot be in a better school than M. de Maillepré's; for besides his high and bright intelligence, which will be to me as a pharos in all future storms and straits, at once serving to cheer me on my way, and to warn me off those treacherous sunken rocks which beset the perilous sea of life, all his affections and affinities seem to be in their right compartments; and he appears to have been taught at a first-rate *manège*, to master, if I may so express myself, 'the great horse' of the passions. This he attributes to the vigilance and untiring love of an excellent mother, and the humanizing

and fructifying powers of home, and domestic influences; for, as he truly says, the whole system of English education, especially for men, is at once petrifying and corrosive—our public schools and colleges being a sort of moral Styx, into which their *alma mater* plunges them, and from which they issue impervious to the ordinary feelings of nature; and only vulnerable in one place, namely, their selfishness, which may be truly considered the heel of human nature, inasmuch as that it is certainly its lowest point. My love to Nell; and now, at last,

"God bless you, dearest Mirry. How I long to see you again, and to give you some better proof that I am, and ever shall be,

"Your affectionate sister,

"GRACE SEDLEY.

"P.S. I open my packet to say, that poor old Angus Troil, asked me if he might *make bould* when I wrote, to send Miss Mirry, de little fairy, (for with poor Angus you are still seven years old) his blessing. 'Certainly,' said I, and why not? a poor man's blessing is a great boon; as many a Dives may find out when it is too late."

When Jemima appeared to tell me that the first dinner-bell had rung, I was still crying over Grace's letter: crying at my poor father's disappearance, which was enough to make me cry, and also her description

of the crumbling desolation of Castle Sedley, which certainly was not calculated to dry my tears; crying too, at what I ought to have rejoiced; namely, the prospect of her marriage with so amiable and distinguished a person as Monsieur de Maillepré; but *self, and fear*, which is the quintessential sublimate of self, ye are monstrous strong, and form, alas! the substratum, more or less, of all poor human clay; and I only heard through the long vista of future years, my Aunt Marley's *veto*, forbidding me to go and live with Grace, and the uttermost stretch of my imagination (tolerably fertile on most other points,) could not soar so far as into that seventh heaven, when I could by any possibility be emancipated from her control. Jemima, after making the announcement about the dinner-bell, had departed. I turned round mechanically to appeal to somebody for advice, or it might be, for sympathy! there was no one. I was alone with my sorrow, and had to turn back with it into my own heart. The vulture of Prometheus is no fable!

CHAPTER III.

Being rather late, Jemima, who had conceived a wondrous affection for me latterly, was good-naturedly on the look-out to fasten my dress; which operation reminded me of Mr. Perkins's *fête* on the following day; and in order to do it all due honour, I bethought me of making a suitable appearance on so great an occasion, as far as my very limited wardrobe would allow.

"Would you have the goodness, Jemima," said I, as soon as the latter had announced that I was "done," "to tack the Mechlin lace, which you will find in my top-drawer, round the body and sleeves of my Indian muslin frock, as we dine at Mr. Perkins's to-morrow."

"I shall be very appy, Miss, to tack the lace hon; or do hany think helse for you," replied that nymph, with a toss of her head; and then added, snapping her

fingers at the conclusion of her speech, by way of *vignette*, "but has for your dining with Mr. Perkins to-morrow, hor hany hother day, not you—no more nor hi shall dine with the Prince Regent, no not more than that;" and then followed snap the second.

"But, Jemima, I assure you, he invited both Miss Dickens and myself, (with Miss James, of course), to dine with him to-morrow."

"Oh! ha! hinwited; that's a wery different thing. I don't say to the contrairy; hinwites don't cost him nothink, *they don't*,—cheap as jallop to him; but the *going* is a very different thing, Miss, you see if it ain't?"

"Well, but I really don't see how, having asked us, he can put us off."

"Hof course you can't, Miss; no one can see a thing to be downright certain of it like, till such times as it is did; but heither the chimbly 'ill take fire; the roof of the ouse blow hoff; the cook be took't hill sudden; a hearthquake be hordered special, hor some hother equally permiscus and hunexpected ewent will appear. Mark my words! there'll be a somethink, and you see if Seidlitz Lodge don't hefferwess afore five o'clock to-morrow, or my name's not Jemima Gannet. Laws a me! hif there ain't the last bell, well you hare ready, Miss; and don't you, hon account of Perkins's blow out to-morrow, stint yourself at dinner to-day, Miss; that's hall."

"I assure you, Jemima," said I, laughing, as I pre-

ceded her down stairs, "I never do stint myself; why should I take that trouble when there are four governesses to do it for me?"

"Ah! very true, miss, and more shame for 'em, I should like to know what's the use of they, and Miss James a-going as reglar as day and night to church, and hearing about feeding the ungry, when they never comes home, and does it."

It has been said that "the woman who deliberates is lost;" if so, I can only hope that deliberation does not produce the same fatal result to girls, or Heaven have mercy on "the young ladies" at "Concave House," that same twenty-eighth of September, the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and eighteen; for their deliberation was not only long, but strong, as they found themselves wedged between one of those sort of dilemmas *à deux temps*, which may be called the twin-temptation dilemma; for it so fell out, that the day was gusty, cold, and cheerless in the extreme, and that the dinner was unusually luxurious, the first course consisting of pea-soup, and a large dish opposite Madame Beccaccia, and Miss Flippens, of culinary cannon-balls, which were very appropriately called hard dumplings. Now the "young ladies" having been asked which they would take—soup, or dumpling—it was that niggardly little monosyllable, "which," that caused them all to be attacked by such a painful paroxysm of deliberation; they being unanimously of the Scotch Rector's opinion, touching the

two livings offered for his selection, "that baith war best." The attraction of the cannon-balls was, that they (naturally) would do for one's hunger the soonest; but the warm and savoury steams of the soup, on the other hand, was sending up its Circean odours irresistible in their glowing promises to the shivering plum-coloured noses, and cherry-fingers of the eager aspirants for food, gathered round that (in) hospitable board. "We should cultivate the beautiful, for the useful will cultivate itself," said Göthe; and "the young ladies" *sans s'en douter*, being of the same opinion, and the pea-soup on this occasion (only) being evidently the beautiful, its acquaintance was so cultivated, that in an incredibly short space of time, there was none left to cultivate. Whereupon, Mademoiselle de Montmorency knocking on the table for silence, hoisted a sort of verbal flag, intimating that Miss James expected every young lady to do her—duty by the dumplings.

And the soupites were the very first to respond to the appeal; but they were indignantly repulsed by being reminded, that they had bartered their hunger for "a mess of porridge." Most cannon-balls give no quarter; not so, at "Concave House," which, to the infinite disappointment of the incipients, were like the potatoes dissected into four; but as Miss Hunter wittily observed, as she turned over the adamantine segment on her plate, with that originality of humour for which the reader may have remarked the young ladies at "Concave House" were peculiarly distinguished, "It

would be harder, if there was none." I glanced towards Miss Sharpe's usual seat near me, at the head of the table, to discover by her countenance whether she had found my letter; but I then perceived, for the first time, that she had changed her seat to the other end of the table, far beyond my reach; was she afraid that at "feeding time" my vicinity would be dangerous, and that I should, for the poor ten-pound note's sake, enter into Shylockean indentures for a pound of flesh, which, indeed, it would have been difficult to have found upon her, as she was as thin as a north-wind, and looked her name well? I must say, that I dislike those sort of ultra thin people, who seem to have spoiled the Egyptians by finding out the secret of making living mummies of themselves: for all these *Cassiusalculi* with a "lean and hungry look," are more or less dangerous. Human virtues belong to flesh and blood; therefore skin and bone seldom, if ever, possess them, but are as parsimonious in their feelings, as nature has been in their miserable and miserly persons. All good feelings are broad and deep, and therefore these psychological elephants cannot possibly have room to exist within the Lilliputian precincts of an ambulating mummy; to be slight—ay, even as a willow-bough is a beauty; but to be thin, why the very echo of the word is sin!

For half a second, I succeeded in catching poor Miss Sharpe's eye, but in less than the other half, it was averted; and she sat, if possible, more on the edge of

her chair than usual, and fidgetted "tremenjus," as Jemima would have expressed it. I then turned away, resolved not to annoy her by any more looks. After dinner, the weather was pronounced too bad for us to go out, so that we were, *nolens volens*, confined to the school-room; but having no ochre to pick, the more juvenile delinquents employed themselves in tearing their books, which served no other purpose than that of inflating their parents' bills. As it never retarded a lesson, or commuted an imposition a single minute, Miss James had always relays of grammars, dictionaries, and abridgments of history, ready to expedite her pupils' voyage of discovery, though I must say, they made the journey something after the fashion of an old Prussian friend of mine, Princess N——, whom I once met on the top of the Simplon; not, indeed, like Lord Byron's English Tourists—I beg pardon, I mean "British Females," at Chamounix, saying "how rural!" but enjoying the view in a *dormeuse* with a pillow stuffed into each window.

The elder girls paired off; ours not being a long parliament, but on the contrary *very short commons*, indeed, left us plenty of time, like our prototypes of the legislature, for doing—nothing! This (which was, perhaps, still more like them), being what we did best, having a decided vocation for it. There was great whispering and exchanging of thimbles and tambour needles that day between Miss Dickens and Miss Sherwood, and mysterious makings up of little silver

paper packages, and settlings of work-boxes, with presentation copies of needle books, reversions of emery pin-cushions, and endowments of floss silk, which might have convinced, even those the least conversant with great events, or political and planetary revolutions, that there was going to be a "something" (again to borrow from Jemima's terse yet comprehensive vocabulary.)

I was very miserable, and *désœuvrée*, having no confidants or worldly affairs to settle, and worse still, no new books to read,—"The Tales of My Landlord" not having yet arrived; and poor Miss Austen having thought fit to accompany Madame de Staël, and the deeply and deservedly lamented Princess Charlotte the preceding year on the long journey! Miss Edgeworth was dilatory, and had done nothing lately; and we were not allowed *Porter* in any shape. At Concave House, Miss Ferrier's admirable novels were not then written; and even in those days, the *Invitâ Minervâ* of the Minerva press was too much for me; for as yet, none of the Tritons of these literary minnows had in their deliriums, commonly called fictions, begun to suffer from undigested lumps of Göthe, or a determination of Schiller to the head, which the "British Public" have deemed, though second hand, quite as good as new in these latter days (saints that they are,) ay, and the British reviewers, too, for that matter; but then, one must recollect that gentlemen of the press cannot undertake to be responsible for the senti-

ments of either the puffs or the peltings done to order in their respective* papers and periodicals; and the few noble exceptions, which prove the rule, though well worth remembering (and gratefully too), are not worth mentioning; but at that time I was in happy ignorance of the atrocities of authorship, the perils of printing, and the rampant rabidity of reviewers, so e'en let me quit the *convex*, and return to the Concave. Seeing me walking up and down the school-room like a troubled spirit, as I really was, gossip delighting me not, nor games either, Miss Flippens accosted me with the following interesting suggestion.

"Miss Sedley, don't you think it would be better if you sat down and took your 'sewing!'" which latter peculiarly vulgar term for needle-work, by the bye, is another of the innumerable elegancies and accuracies of diction, which has crept into modern literature with great success. The reason that calling needlework indiscriminately "sewing" is obviously vulgar, because it is inapplicable to it; for the work in question may chance to be hemming, felling, stitching, whipping, overcasting, or darning, and consequently not "sewing" at all. For the same reason, as well might kissing and joining hands be called, "at one fell swoop," marriage! for though it is true that people do kiss (just at the beginning) in marriage, and join hands (the latter alas!) for ever and a

* To printer's devil. Now don't go and misprint this into *respectable*, there's a dear, good, worthy gentleman: for you, who no doubt, are the very *type* of respectability, must surely know better.

day, yet neither of these proceedings, separately, nor both of them combined, constitute that awful ceremony called "Marriage!" either according to the rites of the church, or to the wrongs of the institution. So after reading this invaluable work, I hope I shall never again have the misfortune to hear anything in the shape of a gentlewoman call her work, her "sewing!" unless, indeed, she means to proceed the whole animal; and also call kissing her young lady-friends (a most ridiculous and unpleasant custom, peculiarly rife amongst "British females"), and shaking hands with their brothers, marriage! which would be as absurd as comparing the bite of a gnat to the sting of a serpent, or the amiable little *piquante* attentions of a whole nest of hornets, to the homœopathically ticklish predicament of an innocent fly, taking a constitutional walk over one's equally innocent nose. However, both as regards hornets, and another equally venomous animal, rejoicing in the same initial, there can be no doubt that

"Honesta quardam scelera successus facit."

I thanked Miss Flippens, but declined availing myself of her obliging hint, as I was at that time reaping some of the bitter fruits which others had sown for me. It seems a cruel thing that, as we should all of us, from the wisest down to the silliest, do both ourselves and others quite harm enough in this world, if left to our own devices, friends and relations must be always

getting our poor piece of network, called life, into such an unconscionable tangle for us, that we can neither get out of it, or go on with it, and so nine times out of ten are compelled to struggle, till we die in the toils; for there are few mice in the world, though an abundance of rats (more especially in, and about St. Stephens) which are terribly versed in multiplication, if in nothing else. At length I recollected that if I thought till doomsday, it would neither discover my father's retreat, bring my dear good uncle back, or give me any legitimate "local habitation" in this world; for, oh! how soon we learn the bitter lesson, that we can do nothing towards the amelioration of our own fate. A chain of circumstances is forged for us; with it, we are bound and fettered in the strong prison of necessity, without in the first instance having committed any fault, like the victims of the first French revolution, whose only crime was being guilty of none; and for one, that has the courage or the perseverance (not forgetting the good fortune) to escape from their bondage, millions only do so, by being led out to the stake.

But in either instance, whether our lot be evasion or execution, it teaches that one great truth, that on God alone must we depend; and that there is no appeal from man, but to Him; and then, come what may, we shall still believe that whatever is, is right, however wrong the means may appear that are employed to achieve it, for everything leads one to suppose that that strange and complicated tissue, called human destinies,

must be the tapestry of heaven, which, like every other, is always worked on the wrong side, showing us nothing but the cross-grained shreds and nottings here and *there*, which alone we shall behold as a beautiful and finished whole.

Laying down my load, then, for the present—as life is a long journey to many, and more or less a weary one to all, and we should not, therefore, be too prodigal of our sorrow, for any single misfortune, but remember that

"Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof,"

and so remembering, I went up stairs.

Oh! the horrors of having no room that one could call one's own, or where one could be to oneself! I cannot say, that

"By the waters of Babylon I sat down and wept,"

but by those in the little *pro bono publico* dressing-room, I certainly did—and knelt down, and prayed, too. Oh! blessed boon of God to mortals! Prayer is the electric telegraph of the soul to Heaven: it asks for mercy, and the instantaneous answer from above is Peace!

I rose up comforted, for I had cast my burden upon Him, whom I knew could bear it, or would enable me to do so; and after plunging my face into cold water, and drying my eyes, I went into the next room to

Helen and Jessy, who set up a cry of joy at my appearance, and began praising me for my goodness in coming to them; but as I knew I did not deserve their praises, having, poor little things, completely forgotten them, and only then having gone to them to escape from the galleys of the school-room—not being a great philanthropist, *alias* a benevolence-monger by trade, and, above all things, detesting fine sentiments and false pretences, I laughed as I sat down near the fire, and said, as I made free with Helen's and Jessy's ears, both of whom considered my pinches as an especial honour:

"You are pleased to take my visitation all to yourselves; but how do you know that I did not come here on account of the good fire, and wholly and solely to make myself comfortable?"

"Oh, because we know you didn't!" answered they, logically, in the same breath; and as the conclusion they had jumped to was all in my favour, I did not of course argue the point, but took up what the elegant Flippens called their *sewing*, which happened to be a doll's frock, the tucks of which they could not, as Jessy despondingly informed me, get straight; so after the most approved rule of the sages of every age, from the time when Adam was made Governor of Ceylon,* during the first Whig administration—for,

* The Jews have a tradition that, when Adam committed that very silly act of mortgaging Eden for an apple (all the blame of which he of course put upon his wife), and was expelled from Paradise, he was sent

according to Dr. Johnson, the D—l was the first Whig, but, unfortunately for us of the nineteenth

(*credat judæus*) to Ceylon; while Eve preferred the more salubrious climate of Mount Arafa, near Mecca, which, also, had the additional advantage of being one hundred and seventy-five years' journey from each other. But poor Adam, *a lonely and unprotected man!* is always much to be pitied, even under the most flagrant circumstances. Well, poor Adam, as I was going to say, or rather have already said, being much to be pitied, and also of a social and domestic turn, for he had brought away some branches of the tea-tree from Eden, and there being no clubs, but wooden ones, in those days, and no *coryphées* at all, he really was, as I have just remarked, much to be pitied, for though he had secured the tea (and turn out, too) yet where was a lonely and *unprotected male*, to get hot water wherewith to make it? Where, indeed! but from that never-failing source which, from the beginning, has supplied the whole world so abundantly with it, namely, the Personage whom one must not name to ears polite. So Adam set his wits to work, and after having composed that sublime and commercial free-trade theory, for theory is the beginning of all action, which pronounces exchange to be no robbery, he began to seek employment for his affections (as lady's footman), which had now been some time out of place; and with a nice sense of civil and religious liberty, which every one knows the Whigs are fond of *talking* about for others, and *securing* for themselves, what does he do, but help himself to the devil's spare rib, Madam Lilith—for his Satanic Majesty having taken Eve, did not, of course, want "a *Sunday's best*" in the way of wives. So Lilith and Adam established a little Agapemone of their own at Ceylon, of which the Colonial Office, however, took not the slightest notice, it being no doubt quite as ignorant of what was going on in the Colonies in those days, as it is in these. Well, for a time, nothing could mis-rule better than the petticoat government of Ceylon. Adam made love, and Lilith made tea, till her *sposo*, as usual, made mischief; for, wanting his wife back, he, in a large bolus of custom, dosed Adam with the idea that he

century, not the last!—I began, *secundum artem*, finding great fault with the running of the tucks, telling them that bad work in needles, was what bad grammar was in speaking—a great disgrace to a gentlewoman.

"Vulgar people," said I, "may work and speak badly; but no one with any pretensions to be a lady will be guilty of slovenliness in either."

I've no toleration for a woman who cannot do every sort of plain-work, both neatly and expeditiously; for there is something unfeminine in this sort of incapacity, and an unwomanly woman is always detestable. Most of us take naturally to Berlin-work and embroidery; they are a part of our organization, like hysterics and fainting-fits; but what can be a greater incarnation of

was married to Lilith, and it may easily be supposed how tired the poor man got of her then. But the most remarkable part of this history remains to be told. Adam, still labouring under this matrimonial monomania that Lilith was his wife, one day (that I suppose she had "*not made his tea to his liking*,") told her to go to the d—l; and what confirmed him in the delusion was, that she obeyed him to the letter, and went; thus Adam was once more a lonely and *unprotected man!* In modern times, there are millions of resources for unprotected males, but, alas! in those times, Lilith and Eve were the only females extant, in, or out of, Great Britain. "Necessity," says the proverb, "is the mother of Invention," so Adam, not content with being the father of mankind, takes on himself this maternal *rôle* also, and, "getting up his steam," as the Americans, who were not then invented, now say, what does he do but fall in love with Eve over again! who, on her side, having no prior engagement, accepted his "polite invitation," and so once more they "lived and loved together!" Adam, in his old age, thus becoming what British females denominate "*quite a reformed character!*"

discomfort, and disgust, than one of your dawdling, desultory women, who neither do, nor know how to do anything about a house, but accumulate disorder and privations for themselves and every one about them; whereas, if they learned their Lares and Penates properly by heart, they would find, that however they might be treated like slaves by their owners, they still had a sceptre in their needle, and a shield in their thimble, against the invasions of *ennui;* and they would also know, that burnt-offerings, in the shape of over-roasted joints, and bad dinners, only exasperated, instead of appeasing the Eumenides.

As all this passed through my mind, so I resumed my lecture, after basting down the tucks, and beginning to run one of them.

"Oh! but I never *can* do them as neatly as that," cried Jessy.

"Try. You don't know what you can do, till you try; and there are few much more difficult things which patience and perseverance cannot accomplish."

"Will it please you very very much if I do the whole tuck up as neatly as you have begun it?"

"Very much," said I.

"Then I'll try."

Ambition is infectious, whether simply directed to constructing dolls' clothes, or surreptitiously aimed at subverting dynasties: so that, soon after, Helen was fired with the great intent of astonishing my weak mind with a *chef-d'œuvre* of a doll's bonnet, and these

two vast enterprises kept them so quiet, that I was left to the indulgence of my own thoughts, which did anything but indulge me, as they were cruel in the extreme: for memory is the harshest step-mother I know, never telling us of anything pleasant, but, at the same time, to remind us that we have lost it. For the last hour, there had been a dead silence, and I was looking as intently into the fire as if there was a certainty of my finding a solution of all my doubts and queries amidst its glowing landscapes, and grotesque figures, when the door opened, and Miss Sharpe put her head into the room, but, seeing me, she grew very red, bobbed one of her usual stiff, and yet ricketty, nervous sort of curtseys, and saying:

"Oh! I beg your pardon: I did not know you were here, Miss Sedley," withdrew, despite my "Pray come in, Miss Sharpe," so that I again relapsed into my reverie, till roused by an exclamation from Jessy, who for the last half hour had been straining her eyes at the window over the miraculous tuck:

"Oh, Miriam! do come here. I think you will say that I have done it beautifully!"

"Well," said I, laughing as I rose, and walking over to the window; "you should leave me to say that, Jess."

"Why?" asked Jessy, innocently.

"Because, don't you know," said Helen, "people always appear ridiculous when they praise themselves."

"Do they?" re-interrupted poor little Jessy, again appealing to me.

"Yes: Helen is quite right. They most certainly do appear not only ridiculous, but contemptible. Suppose that even the Sun, if it could speak, were suddenly to burst out into a thousand rays, saying: 'What a brilliant fellow I am! What have you, in your poor little farthing rushlight-world, the earth, to compare to me? Not gold and diamonds, certainly, for they could not even exist without me; and as for that poor, pale-faced old woman, the Moon (whose maiden name was Diana), she'd tumble down the clouds, and break her neck, if I did not light her up every night!' Now, though all this is perfectly true, yet don't you think we should laugh if we heard the Sun bragging and boasting in this manner? I really think the very sky would laugh till it brought out an eruption of stars on its face!"

"Ha! ha! ha! I'm sure I should laugh!" cried Jessy, now in full giggle, dancing, and clapping her hands, till she forgot even the doll's frock, which fell from them, and which I took up, and, duly examining it, said:

"Well, this really is well done, only the stitches are not quite even, some being smaller than others; so you see, my Jess, we are never quite so clever as we think ourselves: but still, it is a great improvement upon all the other work I have ever seen of yours; so, as I told you, you don't know what you can do till you try."

"Is it well done enough for me to have as many kisses as I like, both my ears pinched, and to choose a story?" said Jessy.

"Why, really, upon examining it again, I must say that I think it is."

The next moment, Jessy's little arms were round my neck, and I only escaped strangulation by hurrying the second act of the ear pinching, after which I turned to Helen, and asked when the bonnet was to be finished.

"Oh!" said Helen, listlessly; "I've done it, and undone it so many times, that I don't think I can do it. However, at all events, I shall leave it till to-morrow."

"It is very right to be diffident and doubtful of our success, Helen; but when doubt and diffidence are not accompanied by industry and perseverance, they degenerate into indolence, which is the rust of the mind, and unfits it for all useful purposes. Remember the French proverb I told you the other day: '*Vouloir, c'est pouvoir!*'"

"*C'est vrai!*" cried Helen, executing a sort of *bravoura* of kisses on my eyelids and forehead, as she nearly pushed Jessy off my lap to make way for herself, "*car je veux t'aimer, et je t'aime.* And now for a story, and I will finish the bonnet to-morrow."

"Well, what story is it to be?"

"Oh! that nice German story about Master Cherry-stalk's Cat."

"What! the old Schrausenhaussen story?"

"Yes," said Helen, laughing, "the old Crackenjaw-senstory."

"But Jess was to choose. Do you also choose Master Cherrystalk's Cat, Jess?"

Jessy having mewed assent, I began, and ended, the life and adventures of that wonderful animal with great applause, both my auditors deciding, *nem con.*, that, Pur-the-moon, Master Cherrystalk's cat, was a much more profound and original thinker (of course he was when he swallowed mathematics instead of mice, and lapped metaphysics instead of milk), and altogether a greater genius than his English, or, rather, French rival, "Puss in Boots;" but I would not, nor will not, give up my old friend, the "Marquis de Carrabas's faithful Squire" for all the German grimalkins that never smelt a rat, but will maintain, against a world in arms—or in boots either—that the *Chat Botté* was at once the finest feline gentleman, and the cleverest diplomatist that ever existed; for though, no doubt (*sans compter ceux de nos Châteaux en Espagne*) we have many quite as treacherous, yet are they not within ten thousand skins as clever.

After prayers that night, when every head had been curled and capped, and Madame Beccaccia had supervised the perpendicular position of the bottle of dentifrice, in the second drawer, left-hand corner, and she and the rest of her coadjutrices were filing off, the thought struck me, that it was just possible, by some unforeseen *contretemps*, that Miss Sharpe might not

have got my letter; and if so, the poor woman would think that I was not only unkind, but ill-bred, in not having answered hers. I was puzzled how to act; for if I asked her, as she had said nothing about it, it would look as if I thought about what I had done, and wanted to remind her of it. The bare idea was worse than perplexing—it was detestable: but then, on the other hand, if she had not found it, and it had gone astray, how should I be able to remedy the evil, and to exculpate myself in her opinion, if I did not ascertain the real state of the case?

Poor, dear Mademoiselle de Guilleragues!—here another of her golden rules came to my aid—which was, never through life to let a false delicacy, or spurious generosity, risk the smallest particle of the well-being of another, that we might stand a step or two higher on our own dignity; but always strictly and unshrinkingly weigh and judge our own heart, as God judged all hearts by its unvarnished and unveiled intentions; and when our consciences had so judged it, never to let our courage shrink from carrying out its sentence.

Mine having therefore now decided, that whether Miss Sharpe would think me mean or not, I ought on her account to find out whether she had received what I intended she should receive. Having come to this decision, I followed her as she was disappearing through the dressing-room; and as soon as I had closed the door, perceiving that we were alone, I said,

as hurriedly as I could, in passing on to the washing-slab, so as not to make an *affaire d'état* of it:

"Miss Sharpe, I hope you found the letter I left for you this morning under the stocks?"

"Oh, yes, thank you; but, indeed, I'd rather repay it as I said, and save you the forfeit-money; and then, you know, it would be a mutual accommodation, Miss Sedley. Though now obliged to be a teacher in a school, you have no idea how proud my dear father, who belongs to one of the very first families in Margate, always brought us up to be. Indeed, my mother's relations, too, are almost all *carriage people*—quite so, I may say; for old Mrs. Wigget, for many years, was the only shay visitor we had."

Miss Sharpe delivered this eloquent piece of declamation amid a series of little fidgets, first standing on one leg, and then on the other, like a sick canary, amid much hesitation and colouring, carefully avoiding to look towards me the while. Had every word she uttered been an ipecacuanah lozenge, it could not have made me feel more nauseously uncomfortable; and I was truly grateful when Jemima appeared, at the penultimate sentence of her harangue, to say that Miss James wanted her immediately, in the drawing-room.

I came to the conclusion that night—and it has never yet been refuted, though often since confirmed—that nothing can be more painfully mean than the way which a certain class of English have of asking,

unless it be their manner of receiving; but, poor creatures, one must make allowances for them; for bad manners are the national epidemic, and *no mistake;* however, in the course of my life, I have met with three or four English persons, who not only did noble things, but did things nobly; reminding one of the right royal largesses, the *Noël* of "Chivalry's Pilgrim Kings." And this is well for the solemn pageant of some great necessity; but on the poor, and much-reviled continent, verily! one meets a Good Samaritan at every road-side, by which poor human nature faints; and when it falls among thieves, that best of oil and wine—sympathy and help!

A very charming lady of my acquaintance, who passes her life between the study of Christianity, and the acting the great part of a Christian, and whose charities are as universal as charity should be, was very angry with me for my solar-microscope view of the English character, wherever money is concerned, when, lo! one day she came to me as much excited as so well-regulated a person could be. She had applied to some rich lady, in one of her *sœur de charité* rounds, for some great and urgent case of distress.

"And would you believe it?" said she, "her answer was, *'Oh, no, I never give to those sort of things, for I'm sure the people who collect, make a profit on the money for themselves!'*"

And this was said by one (*soi-disant*) gentlewoman! to another.

"Oh! yes," said I, "I'd believe anything of English coarseness, and ill-breeding, and more where money is concerned, and so will you too, when you have looked a little oftener through my solar microscope, and seen how, in English society, the poor little monstrous animalculæ are all preying upon and tearing each other to pieces; for to take shelter under the umbrella of 'the Times' against the pitiless storm that awaits me, for daring to tell the truth upon the sealed subject of our national vices. We pride ourselves* on the solid *bonâ fide* character of our civilization; if we do not strike so high as some countries, we do not fall so low as others; and we are, at all events, what we profess to be: perhaps rather better. This comfortable conviction, however, is fated to receive an occasional shock;" and it most undoubtedly would be better, if we could—

"Perish in this shock,
Than linger peace-meal on the rock!"

of flinty, sordid selfishness, upon which it so often throws us.

"Here's your frock, Miss," said Jemima.

As I scrubbed away most unmercifully at my teeth, as if to get the taste of Miss Sharpe out of my mouth, or, it might be, the dust from the wheels of Mrs.

* See leading article of "The Times," of Saturday, November 30th, 1850.

Wigget's "shay!" and those of all the other "*carriage people!*"

"There's your dress, Miss, but my b'leefe his, that there won't be no dressing wanted to-morrow, hexcept the dressing of the six o'clock dinner at Concave Ouse."

"So you still think we shall not dine with Mr. Perkins, Jemima?"

"Dine with him! oh, lor, ah! no fear of your not dining with him, and it is a sight: oh, Gemini!"

"What he eats for two, that is with a twin appetite, I suppose?" laughed I.

"For two, Miss! bless you! nearerer for twenty! but it's the nasty mess as he makes of it: quite a hoperation! for all the world as hif he was making hup one of his hown prescriptions; first he shovels hon the salt as hif it was salts, Miss, by the hounce—actelly by the hounce; then he has at the cayenne pepper has hif he was a making hup them ere cayenne pepper pills, has Miss Homeny takes, and which I always ave, and always shall, consider them it his has makes her wig so dry and hobstinate-like, and her nose like a capsicum; and then when he've got this here Tower of Babel on his plate, to see the way the wittles disappear! hit's hawful, Miss! quite hawful! one would think he must be heither a hog, or a conjurer, for that no mere Christian could make mountains vanish has he does."

"Well, I am baby enough to be very fond of good

conjuring, and shall look forward to Mr. Perkins's performance to-morrow at Seidlitz Lodge."

"Seidlitz Lodge, Miss! not a bit of hit, that's the wery first think as he'll conjure away: you see if he don't."

"Why, I thought you said just now, that I should be sure to dine with Mr. Perkins to-morrow!"

"Oh, yes! *with* him, Miss, fast enough, but quite hon another line; the Seidlitz Lodge coach never takes no hinsides, hit don't; besides, hI know very well what I see and heeared this arternoon, and it's heasy to know what *that* foretells, without consulting hon a gipsy."

"You speak nothing but riddles, Jemima: what do you mean?"

"I mean, Miss, that this blessed arternoon, no later than four o'clock, Tibbs, who was digging a bed of Jerusalem poneys—hartichokes, I should say—was called away from his work to speak to Miss Homeny hin the all; so has I suspected there was a somethink, thinks hI, h'Ill listen, and ear what you've a been called hin so particlar hand special for; so presently hI ears Miss Homeny a hemming, hand a grunting, hand a clearing her throat, has hif she ad a chaldron of Perkins's cayenne pills a blocking hup the way, and has soon has she'd shovelled some on 'em down, she says, Tibbs, says she, you must leave your work hand go directly to town, to Fortnum hand Mason's, for a bottle hof the best this year's gherkins: here's the

money, hand mind has you brings 'em back yourself, has they're wanted for dinner to-morrow, hand call hat Clarke's, hat the same time, hand tell him to give you two of his best geese, hand to be sure that they hare the best, for they hare for a person that his and ought to be a judge, but, above all, don't forget the gherkins. Now, Miss, hI say, has Madame Beckhatchyou says to the young ladies, hI should just like to ave a free translation of that ere, and know, in plain English, the meaning of them there gherkins ?"

"Perkins ! Jemima, it is but too plain that no goose, not even the owner, will grace the festive halls of Seidlitz Lodge to-morrow !"

CHAPTER IV.

The next morning a bulletin was issued, stating that Miss Dickens was too unwell to get up, though, she added, it was nothing but a cold. Mr. Perkins was to call for us in state at two o'clock to go to the Bible Meeting; but Miss James, always happy to open a channel of communication between Concave House and Seidlitz Lodge, despatched that never-let-to-rest locomotive Tibbs, to Turnham Green, with a message—or it might be a note—apprizing him of Miss Dickens's indisposition, which would also prevent her having the pleasure of dining at Seidlitz Lodge that day; whereupon Glauber Rodolphus forwarded, by the return Tibbs, his representative in the shape of a nauseous dose, and also the following note, which Miss James (with the powder) read out for Miss Dickens' and my edification,

just as Jemima was putting the finishing stroke to my toilette:

"Dear and most honoured Madam,—

"I regret to hear of your amiable young friend Miss Dickens's illness, but hope to see her professionally a little before two. I also most deeply regret having to announce to you a sad and most unexpected misfortune——

"'I knowed it,' *sotto voced* Jemima at this paragraph of the note, and at the same time, by way of note of interrogation, squeezing my dress terribly tight in the waist.

"But," continued Miss James, "about an hour ago the north-east wall of my dining-room fell in—or rather, I should say, fell out—crushing, I am sorry to add, in its fall a favourite China pig. I won't say how I had reckoned upon the bacon of that pig, for a certain fair friend of mine—but man proposes" (not always, seemed to think poor Miss James, as she sighed deeply in reading this affecting sentence) "and God disposes. And as Shakspeare (or Mr. Shandy, I forget which, but one of these great poets) says, 'We are here to-day, and gone to-morrow'—a great truth, that I see daily illustrated among my patients. You perhaps will be in some sort prepared for this accident, as it was only yesterday that we were talking of settlements, and saying what slippery things they were, either in walls or on widows. But to the young ladies, who was to

have honoured me with their companies, I trust you will express my apologies and regrets—unless, indeed, you, and they, will honour me with your companies at dinner, at the 'Star and Garter,' at Richmond, or 'The Toy,' at Hampton Court, if you don't think it too late to go to either of these places, after we have been to the meeting; at all events, I shall have the pleasure of being at your door, at two precisely, in a glass coach, which I have hired expressly for the auspicious occasion; and meanwhile remain, most honoured madam, with my respects to Miss Omeny, and the young ladies that was to have honoured me with their companies at dinner to-day,

"Your faithful and obedient servant,

"GLAUBER RODOLPHUS PERKINS.

"Seidlitz Lodge,
("At least what's left of it,)
"Turnham Green, September 29th, 1818."

"And how beautifully he bears it!" exclaimed Miss James, casting up her eyes, as she refolded Mr. Perkins's epistle.

"Ah! some people can bear *nothink!*" muttered Jemima, still busy about my dress.

"It would be *indeckerous*" (indecorous), resumed Miss James, "for unmarried females to go and dine at an hotel with what may be called a bachelor, though fenced and fettered by an unfortunate matrimonial alliance. In the *boosom* of his do-mestic privacy, it was

a very different thing; the world would then not have known it, and consequently could not have talked; don't you agree with me, my dear Miss Dickens?"

But poor Miss Dickens appeared to be suffering so much, that whether it was assent or dissent that issued from the bed, it was impossible to determine, as Miss Dickens's feeble voice was inaudible in the — blankets.

"No, Mr. Perkins must give us the pleasure of his company here; and I invite you also, Miss Sedley," said Miss James, as she sailed out of the room.

She could scarcely have got down stairs, before Miss Dickens, starting up in her bed, and pushing the curtain aside, put out a peculiarly merry-looking rosy face, which did not seem to be the most distantly related to the poor feeble voice we had just heard; and bursting into a loud laugh, said:

"Well, what do you think of Glauber Rodolphus's put off?"

"Why, that if the story's true, that he's not so fortunate in his mortar as in his pestle, as some one said of another apothecary, who ruined himself with building. But I am glad to see that you are not really ill: but why do you pretend to be so?"

"Oh! nothing, only I did not at all fancy the bore of dining at Seidlitz Lodge; but now don't go and betray me into the hands of the Philistines, Miriam."

"I don't think," I replied, trying to be as mild as Miss Flippens herself, "that I am in the habit of

telling tales; I don't even tell stories, except to amuse Helen and Jessy, since they have been ill."

"No, I must do you the justice to say that you never do tell either tales or stories; and do you know, you're just the sort of girl I *could have liked* desperately, Miriam; you are in some things such a capital fellow, as a friend of mine would say; but then again, in others you are so high, and so grand, that somehow or other, even when I was running full speed to like you the most, I was always pushed back by being afraid of you."

"I'm sorry for that, for I don't mean to be either high or grand, as you call it, for I'm sure I have no reason to be so, indeed I don't know who has, but it's not that: I'll tell you what it is, for I feel it myself, and it makes me miserable. I have always had grown-up people for my companions, and very superior people, too; and I think it has made me too old for my age; and yet, that can scarcely be, for I delight in children, and always feel at home with them: but people like Miss James and Miss Omeny, and the four teachers, they fret and ruffle my very soul, I have not the temper to support their stupidity, or the toleration to palliate their ignorance, to say nothing of their vulgarity; and yet," added I, looking round the room, and perceiving that she was gone—"Jemima *fait mes délices*, but I suppose it is because she is what she is, and they are always trying to be what they are not, and never will be,—fine ladies!"

"Well, perhaps it is that," responded Miss Dickens, in a dubious voice, "but then, you read all sorts of stupid books, and besides you know Latin."

"Come! that is a far-fetched accusation, for if I do, I never speak it, and therefore it is a doubly dead language with me; so be just, Mary Anne, for if you had not wondered over that prescription of Dr. Bailey's once, when I had that brain-fever, or rather, when I was recovering from it, you would never have known that I was guilty of that crime; since it seems it *is* a crime to know anything, everyone else don't know."

"Well, yes, certainly, I must do you justice, too, about that, you never do bother one with your learning and all that sort of humbug; and you are very good-natured in doing our French and Italian exercises for us, and thereby helping us to *do* old Beccaccia and the mock Montmorency; but still, still and for all that, you are not one of us."

"Not one of you? Am I not then one of the 'Thirty-nine Articles' forming the Concave House 'Establishment?' for with the four incapables, we make *just* thirty-nine, though not perhaps thirty-nine *just!*"

"What I mean is, that you are always Miriam Sedley, by yourself Miriam, and you never talk about lovers and admirers, and all that sort of thing, as we do."

"And for a very good reason," said I, laughing, "because I have none to talk about."

"Oh! that is your own fault, I'm very sure that

had you given that handsome Captain Pierrepoint only half the encouragement I gave my Algernon, he would have been at your feet long ago, for he never takes his eyes off of you, and has actually changed his place in the gallery with Major Drinkhard, to have a better view of you."

"Encouragement! have a man at my feet, whose name I never heard till now!" repeated I, unaffectedly horrified, "surely you are jesting?"

"Well, you'll find it no joke to be an old maid, which I think is what is very likely to happen, if you go on as you are doing."

"No joke, certainly," said I; "for it seems to me about the most sensible thing a woman can do, is to be an old maid; for Helen Penrose says her mother is always crying, and a lady I know, that is, by name only; but every one says that she had such a dreadful husband: that he was a perfect monster of meanness, and cruelty; and that when husbands choose to be such, there is no law to restrain them, but many to help and encourage them in their wickedness; and such being the case, I think women are desperate fools to marry. Look too, how shamefully that Lord Mountflummery behaved to poor Miss Sharpe's sister."

"Oh, stuff!" responded Miss Dickens, with a toss of her head, like a genuine "British female," as she was; "I always take the men's part. A woman's a fool that can't manage her own husband.

"Dear me!" said I, "what a sweeping charge of

folly you are bringing against nearly the whole sex, which, after all, is only another version of what I said, namely, that women were great fools to marry. I have no doubt there are exceptions, and that the poor Princess Charlotte, for instance, found a husband the most docile, irreproachable, and obedient of created beings, and that all heiresses apparent to thrones will do the same; but to those who have no crowns, and only aspire to being "a crown to their husband," I repeat that they run a fearful risk, as long as the laws are as they are, and that there is not one to protect them against the most fiend-like persecution, as long as it is conceived in unimaginable meanness, and executed with the most unscrupulous villany."

"Oh! a fiddlestick for laws! fast bind—fast find; and if my husband was to play *me* false, I'd soon find it out; and would not I lead him a life? He should have enough of it, I promise him," cried Miss Dickens, thumping the immaculate pillow, as vindictively as if it had been Fitz Pipeclay himself, a Benedict of ten years standing, discovered in a *case* with the housemaid.

"Well, I cannot say," said I, "that I have any fancy either for leading people lives, or for being led one; and as for being jealous of my husband, or finding him out, as you call it, I should either despise him too thoroughly, or compassionate him and myself too deeply, to feel what is termed jealousy."

"I confess I don't understand you, Miriam; I'm dull, like the honest Satyr in the fable, and surprised

at seeing you blow hot and cold; for first you cool your jealousy with contempt, and then you warm it with compassion! What do you mean?"

"I mean," said I, "that if I had the misfortune to be married to so contemptible a wretch, that he could, out of mere cold-blooded vanity, or vulgar gallantry, endanger another woman's reputation and my happiness, I should despise him too thoroughly ever to waste a single feeling on him but that of contempt; but if he was so ill-fated as to really love another woman, and no longer love me, I think I should pity him and myself so profoundly, that like an overcharged galvanic battery, my heart would burst, and there would be an end of it."

"Pity *him! your* heart break! More fool you then for your pains. I'd tear his eyes out, if that's the sort of use he made of them;" and "Poor Mary Anne" sank back upon her pillow, as if she had actually, and not merely theoretically, performed this somewhat fatiguing act of gouging.

"What! Algernon's eyes?" asked I, laughing.

"Ay, any eyes, and all the eyes in the world, if they played me false, even though they had all hooks to them, and were to fasten into mine, and tear them from my sockets while I was about it."

As she delivered this little lecture upon moral philosophy, there was about Miss Dickens's whole deportment, inflection of voice, and kindling of eye, and cheek, something so Sidonic, not to say Sardonic, and

quintessentially Lady Macbethish, that, altogether, I did not envy Lieutenant FitzPipeclay, though there was something not only more Christian, but exceedingly pretty in his baptismal name. Still, I fear, he must have found all his *Inamoratas poulets à la tartare;* neither could I help reflecting, that here was another proof that clipping, mowing, rolling, and suppressing every *good* and expansive feeling, every warm and generous impulse, does not, in the least, interfere with the most luxuriant and ferine growth of poisonous weeds, and stubborn branches of gnarled upas. Oh, life! thou art indeed a strange mystery of palsied right and gratuitous wrong; is it because, as Plato says, that the body is the grave of the soul? if so, it is with it, as with all other tombs, unchecked and deserted nature furnishes the weeds and the corruption; affection and pious attention alone strew the flowers, and grave and honourable epitaph. It was one of those unities which chance so often preserves in the drama of existence, that just as I was pondering upon graves, and their inmates, and the charnel affinities of matter and spirit, Mr. Perkins should be announced, *he,* the high priest! of, and great purveyor to the latter.

"Your most obedient, Miss Sedley," said he, advancing with his best Bible Meeting bow, at once pious and polite, "heered of my unfortunate haccident, hi suppose; should ave been too appy hotherwise to ave ad the honour, though should still ave been deprived of the

pleasure of your company, my dear Miss Dickens. How did we get hill? hey, nothink serious, I ope," added he, tenderly feeling that young lady's pulse, which, luckily for her *rôle de malade*, was thumping at fever speed, after the gymnastics of her theoretical gouging.

"Humph," said Mr. Perkins, "perfect quiet, and saline draughts."

"Not Seidlitz though," murmured the "*malade imaginaire*" in satirical allusion to Glauber Rodolphus's frustrated hospitality.

"Ahem! no; nothink more than a little lemon-juice, and carbonate of soda; rather of an *hexciteable tempratoore*, hi should say, like our friend, Miss Sedley, here."

"Please, Sir," said Jemima, flinging into the room, "the coachman wants to know if so be as you mean to keep the osses a-standing long here? cause hif so, he'd bait e'm afore they go back to Hammersmith."

"Hon no account," cried Mr. Perkins, springing to his feet!" we shall not get good places, if we do not proceed immediately. Good morning, Miss Dickens; hi shall look hin again in the hevening."

And so saying, Mr. Perkins proceeded to the door, leaving me to follow at a respectful distance, as "British females" are always expected to do, wherever the superior male animalculæ of the creation are concerned. So be it, as long as, thank Heaven, we are not obliged to follow in their steps. Miss Dickens

flung off her night-cap, ran her fingers through her hair, so as to give it the spiral form of Mr. Perkins's toupée, and kneeling upon her bed, began imitating his dignified deportment till he had quitted the room, while Jemima crammed her apron into her mouth not to laugh, and I followed him down stairs. Miss James and Miss Omeny, being in waiting in the hall, were duly handed into the "glass-coach," which, by-the-bye, from its capacious dimensions, I should suspect had once been a mourning-coach; for, although it had thrown off its weeds, it was now labouring under an incipient yellow fever, there being an evident struggle going on, on the part of the original black to pierce through the coat of jonquil-coloured paint which the worldly-minded job-carriage man, into whose hands it had fallen, had daubed it, in order that it might once more take its way among the haunts of men. Miss Sharpe, it seems, (greatly against her will) was to be of the party; for even then, at the eleventh hour (much to the amusement of the young gentlemen at Mammon House, who were at their usual post, looking over the wall); she blushed, simpered, hesitated, advanced, drew back, fidgetted, and annoyed everybody by entreating that Miss Flippens might be taken in her stead, "as she is," added Miss Sharpe, "so much more fond of gaiety than I am."

"Nonsense, Miss Sharpe! do get in, and don't keep us all day," cried Miss James out of patience.

I plainly perceived that I was the *bête noire*, whom

Miss Sharpe dreaded, and would gladly have relieved her from my presence, but knowing that to offer to remain behind would be useless, I did not add to the delay by proposing it; at length being fairly (or rather unfairly) wedged and launched, Miss Sharpe *pour se donner une contenance,* hazarded the original remark that she thought the meeting would be very amusing.

"Why—a—not egzacly," responded Mr. Perkins, pulling up his shirt-collar with much gravity, as if he had the fear of the Archbishop of Canterbury before his eyes—and the walls of Lambeth Palace in sympathy with the north-east dining-room wall at Siedlitz Lodge had lain crumbling at his feet.

"I mean inte*resst*ing," (for, of course, so she pronounced the word, interesting) said Miss Sharpe, correcting herself with much colouring and fidgeting, which latter was an operation not only of difficulty but of danger, wedged as we were, for Miss Omeny always carried a pair of scissors in her pocket, whether with the intention of bringing Mr. Perkins to the point in one way or another, or of cutting the connexion in case she failed, I know not;—as the truth upon that, as upon many other equally important subjects, has never transpired.

"What o'clock is it, Mr. Perkins?" asked Miss James.

"Why," replied that gentleman, digging up his turnip and consulting it, "I fear I'm raythor slow

(very I thought); for though I always set my watch by the Oss Guards, I never can get it to go by it."

"There is one excuse to be made for it," said I, glancing at the admirable imitation of block-tin which the said watch presented, "the Horse Guards are so much better mounted."

"Oh, Miss Sedley! do show Mr. Perkins your watch; I think it is the greatest little beauty I ever saw."

"I have not mine with me," said I, affecting to feel for it.

"Dear me!" said Miss James, "how very careless you are; isn't she, Miss Sharpe?"

"Yes," assented Solomon the Second, now looking at me for the first time since we had been packed. "I must say, Miss Sedley, that you forget everything."

"Well," said I, laughing, "as long as it is only things it don't much matter; but I hope I shall never forget any person, not even myself."

"I cannot conceive why you don't wear your watch outside, and then you would not forget it—such a lovely little watch, too, would be such an ornament," said Miss James.

"I dislike the idea of a watch by way of an ornament, if it is ever so pretty; I think it looks vulgar in that capacity," replied I.

"I should think," said Miss James, bridling with proud superiority, "that *I* must be rather a better

judge than you on those, and all other points, Miss Sedley, and therefore I desire for the future that you will wear your watch outside; and Miss Sharpe you will have the goodness to see that Miss Sedley does wear it so, and every morning that she forgets to put it on, you will impose either an imposition, or a forfeit for the omission."

"Very well, Um," assented Miss Sharpe with conscious dignity, once more understanding why she had been created, and exulting (as all should do) in the fulfilment of her mission, while I, equally in my vocation, began to think that this was like my luck: three years had I been under Miss James's judicious and deputy-maternal care, and never before had she, or any of her staff remarked, or cared how I wore my watch, or whether I wore it at all. I may as well end this subject here, by at once stating that of course the next morning, not being able to produce the watch, and after much lecturing and cross-questioning, being obliged to own that I had lost it (as indeed I'm sorry to say I had for ever)—thinking I suppose that this was not a sufficient loss of time, Thomson was called in, and my "way of life" fell instantly "into the sear and yellow leaf," by being compelled to learn the whole of "Winter" by heart, or rather by head, which I think settled an annuity of colds on me, though of course ever since I have religiously avoided an English winter when I could. Miss Sharpe, too, it was, who ordered the execution, and I said to myself, as she

passed the awful sentence, *Et tu Brute!* but thou hast strange antithetical masques and myths, oh, Nemesis! in our poor little molehill of a world: and yet this was nothing, a mere "taste of their quality," for they begin in "mouthing," but generally end by "tearing a passion to tatters!"

Arrived at the meeting, we found as Mr. Perkins had prognosticated, that we were late—the crowd was immense and the heat suffocating, though the day without was cold, neither was the odour agreeable—although no doubt it was that of sanctity. Mr. Perkins spread his wings, and tucking Miss James under one, and Miss Omeny under the other, strutted forward a step or two like a triumphant bantam; but the cram being sufficient to have regaled a whole farmyard, it was too much for Mr. Perkins to manage singly (I say singly, as his companions were certainly no chickens), and consequently it only repelled his advances, which, at all events, the former had never done. Miss Sharpe and I were left to make our own way—no very easy thing for women to do in this world under any circumstances; but under the present, an utter impossibility.

"Oh! oh! I shall faint," gasped Miss Sharpe, "that's flat."

"No, it would be very natural," rejoined I; "but pray don't, for fainting to do it properly requires space, and here I really don't think a fly could find room to sneeze—if they ever do such a thing."

While Miss Sharpe was still repeating her intention (despite my remonstrances), of suspending her own individual animation, a labour which at any time would have been cousin German to a sinecure, I perceived a great, gaunt man, pushing his way down, or rather stretching out his arm over several heads, as he brandished a flaming torch in the shape of a scarlet and yellow silk pocket handkerchief, while he stood upon an upper bench, and presently I heard my own name, and the following invitation to Miss Sharpe, and myself uttered in broad Scotch.

"Whisht! eh? hist! Miss Marian, my dear, tsit! Speer this way, and I'll make room for you, and the other lassie wi' ye." Upon looking again I recognised the hard, and not over prepossessing features of Colonel Clavering; but exclusive of his good nature in offering us seats, and by so doing, perhaps, preventing our being crushed to death; my heart bounded towards him, hard and forbidding as he was, for the last time I had seen him was at dear, dear——! and a whole Odyssee of associations was conjured up in my heart, gilt with the rays of childhood's first cloudless sun of love! and green with youth's first luxurious hopes! so many of which had already withered and strewed my path with autumn leaves, though I was yet in Spring—I was a fool, but could not help it, and burst into tears; however, it was but a momentary weakness. No alchymist surprised by the profane, at his mysterious labours, could have felt more annoyed

than I did at having let the crucible of my heart (the only one that ever *does* make gold), thus publicly boil over; but I hurried it out of sight, and drying my eyes with the assistance of Colonel Clavering's ossified unyielding hand, which felt as if it had itself petrified in "dealing damnation round the land," I began making the ascension of the *montagne verte*. Not one of the already seated males moved, or made way; on the contrary, it was astonishing how hacknied that truly English quotation of

"Possession is nine points of the law"

became, and poor Miss Sharpe was even greeted with:

"I say, young woman, mind what you are about there; first come, first served, if *you* please."

To which a deep bass voice chimed in:

"Ay, ay, every one for himself, and God for us all."

So that I very soon began to perceive, that though this was a meeting convened for the propagation of Christianity, it was on the plan of "Hamlet" at the country theatre, with the part of "Hamlet" left out by particular desire. At length there was a great "hush," and Mr. Wilberforce appeared on the platform. He commenced by giving the persons then and there assembled many interesting details of the creation of the world, which, nevertheless, I thought were quite as well, not to say better, described in the first

chapter of Genesis, dwelling particularly on the circumstance of every thing having been originally created in pairs, and then again saved in pairs at the time of the Deluge, of which fact Mr. Perkins began busily making notes, as if it was the first time it had come to his knowledge, which really was ungrateful as well as oblivious, with such a practical illustration, and working out of the system as he had on either side of him, in the fair forms of Miss James and Miss Omeny. If words, words, words, one weak, washy flow of words, constitute eloquence, why, then, Mr. Wilberforce was certainly eloquent; but I scarcely think it can, for at that rate would the parish pump be eloquent, especially in the dog days. I think it is Lord Byron who says, he "doubts if the English have any eloquence properly so called." I don't doubt it at all, for I am very sure that they have not; nor could they possibly have any, from the triple influence of their laws, education, and temperament, for enthusiasm is the source of all eloquence; and they have no enthusiasm, and consequently no eloquence, and never attain nearer to it than fluency, which is only the pump, and not the well spring.

In France, they still have orators, for eloquence did not become a traditional effigy on the Tomb of Mirabeau; this, all who have heard Berryer in the Chamber of Deputies, Lamartine in or out of it, and the *Père Lacordaire* at Nôtre Dame will acknowledge, for eloquence is an electric fluid which makes thousands of

cold hearts and inert spirits leap at one bound to its own high standard, and vibrate in unison with its finer sympathies; and where this "touch of feeling that makes all nature kin," does *not* exist, depend upon it there is no eloquence. "Who has not suffered knows nothing," says Fénélon: and for this reason, the Irish, French, Poles, and Italians are eloquent; and the English are not, for in them matter predominates, suffering only as they do from a plethora of prosperity, and an indigestion of wealth, with excruciating paroxysms of chronic arrogance; however, the disease is now at its height, and little as they may think it, a crisis must soon take place in their constitution; but it is on all these accounts that eloquence is not indigenous to their soil, for it is not a household grain to be sown by rude hands in fat pastures, and reaped at stated periods, but a seed germinated near Heaven, and dropped by eagles upon devastated plains and ruined empires, where it takes deep root, and its very luxuriance springs from desolation.

Mr. Wilberforce flowed on, till half-past four, and then it appears the pump was dry, at all events, the audience were, as I heard several gentlemen near me graphically and metaphorically express their sensations and sentiments, and yet the orator had not kept them very long, considering the immense distance he had escorted some of the inhabitants of the united kingdoms, and the terribly warm reception he had prepared for them, though some of his hearers, Colonel Clavering

among the number, complained that he had not dwelt adequately upon eternal punishments, nor quoted Calvin sufficiently on that head. For my part, like Frederick the Great, when some of his subjects were equally displeased with a Lutheran preacher, who did not even hint at eternal punishments, I also thought it a great pity that people could not be d—d as long as they liked, especially when so many take such pains to go to the d—l, it really is not worth while if it is only to be for a short visit.

Going out, Colonel Clavering began asking me about my uncle, when I told him that he was almost, if not quite blind; the horrid old wretch began muttering something about its being a judgment on him for not seeing the doctrines of Calvin in a proper light. It was lucky for this disciple of fire and faggot, that the lightening in my eyes, at that moment, had not power to kill, but I checked myself, and merely said:

"It would seem, Colonel Clavering, that you are so deafened by the anethemas of Calvin, that you never heard our Saviour's words touching the fall of the Tower of Siloam."

He was about to reply, no doubt, in sulphureous flames of Nyon brimstone, when we were forcibly separated by the pressure of the crowd, and when we again met, he had his hand full of tracts and printed hand-bills, for he was one of those sort of sectarian virtuosos who hunt up the curiosities of faith in every

possible nook or corner where anything sufficiently damnatory was to be found.

"Weel, my dear Miss Mariam," said he, offering me one of the handbills, "os I see yer endavering to tak care of yer soul's halth, I'll e'en put you in the way of doing it effactually, for it's to be hopped y'ave heerd of the new sect ca'd the Stumpites, fra hoving been foonded by a pious ond anspired woman o' the name o' Keren Happuch Stump, wha has recaved a more woonderful mission aven than Johanah Southcote; for though saventy-twa, it hos been announced to her in a vasion, that she is pragnent of Judas Iscariot, wha being thus born again, wal be born unto rightiousness, and than Christ wal return to earth to forgave him pooblicly, and the Melanium begin for all true belavers, while unbelavers will see the ground at Smethfield gave way wi a great crack, like that of doom, and the deil and all his angels cooming up in hell fire to corry them into averlasting pardition. Now here is a paper wi' the holy woman's address: No. 5, Fox Court, Liquorpond Street, Chancery Lane, admission half-a-croon; though the piously disposed, ond those onxious to hurry the Malenium, may gie as much more as they plase; for the regenerated Judas conna be born till sooch time as Keren Happuch has recaved from true belavers sufficient siller to buy a goold cradle, set wi' jules for the babe."

"I think she is quite right," said I, "to put off the wonderful event till then, because, you know should it

never take place, it will not be her fault, but that of the infidels who love their thirty pieces of silver quite as much as the old Judas did, and would, many of them, were the temptation thrown in their way, resort to the same means of procuring them, without, however, having the grace to go out and hang themselves afterwards. It is to be hoped," concluded I, "that your pious friend, Mrs. Stump, is like her namesake, Job's youngest daughter, 'the fairest woman in all the land,' for her seventy-two years can be no barrier to her youthful bloom, as, of course, she finds it as easy to get over them externally, as internally."

Thanks to his habitual confusion of ideas, poor Colonel Clavering fancied, through some strange jumbling process of his brain, that I was abounding in his views of Mrs. Stump's extraordinary promises, and so cried out, as Mr. Perkins hurried me into the "glass coach," asserting the while, with almost tears in his eyes, that we should be late for dinner.

"Ah, weel, my dear Miss Mariam, ye'll mind no to be later than sax o'clock to-morrow avening at Fox Court, and racollect as much more than half-a-croon as ye like to gi, and ony stray lambs that ye can bring into the right fold, do."

I thought to myself, as I re-wedged between Miss Sharpe and Miss Omeny, that if Mr. Pinchbeck was "polite" enough to wait at the door of 'The Pig and Whistle' tavern till I came, he would certainly have time to contract a more serious catarrh, than any

arising even from the vapours of the Gulgoose river; while, on the other hand, should Colonel Clavering deem it necessary to be equally courteous, at the entrance of Fox Court, not only would he have leisure to collect sufficient currents of air to cool those more intensely hot regions, whither he was so fond of sending people, whose "souls' health" required a warm climate, as he, the physician-general of all souls, deemed, but Mrs. Stump would likewise have ample time for her *accouchement*, even without waiting for the gold cradle; each new page I turned—not of the book, but of the ledger of life—I found on the balance-sheet a debit of disappointment, or disgust. The beautiful maxim of Christianity is—

"Do unto others as you would they should do unto you."

But *soi-disant* Christians of all sects seem, more or less, to have adapted it to the new tariff of

"*Do* others as they would *do* you."

During the short drive back to Kensington, the pace we went was not "brisk," and conversation was decidedly "dull," as Mr. Perkins would have commercially expressed it; although Miss James and Miss Omeny were both "looking up"—to Mr. Perkins, in the hope he would speak, but Mr. Perkins was hungry, and consequently had not yet digested the many tough things which Mr. Wilberforce had given him to

swallow; so when asked his opinion of the meeting he briefly stated, "that what they had heard required much stoody;" while Miss Sharpe ventured upon a less equivocal panegryic, by asserting, that she thought it "most inter*est*ing." And here a dead silence ensued, till we reached Concave House, where we unloaded to the same chorus, over the wall of Mammon House, to which we had started, and which reminded me of that line in the "Siege of Corinth," which says:

"I saw the lean dogs on the wall!"

It is sad to think that even in the briefest absence from home, some dire event, or irreparable misfortune, may occur, as was proved by Jemima's opening speech, when we reached the hall, where, advancing to meet Miss James, with all the perturbation of manner superindooced (as Mr. Perkins would have said) by strong excitement, she exclaimed:

"Lor! em, what hever will ye do? There's the gherkins gone!—vanished!—disappeared!—can't be found nowhere. I've hasked heverybody hin the ouse—young ladies, governesses, servants, Tibbs, and hall; and nobody haint took 'em, nobody haint seen 'em, and nobody knows nothink at all about 'em. And has for cats—cats his of no use where pickles hand perserves his concerned; no more use, I may say, nor a wedding-ring would be to a hold maid."

I myself thought, and always shall think, that it was this last ill-chosen simile of Jemima's, that threw Miss James into such a fearful passion. Instead of being cool as a cucumber, which would have been more germain to the matter, she vowed she would turn all the servants out of the house; and as for young ladies, not to miss the culprit, they should every one of them have two double lessons a-day, for the next month to come—and that would teach them how to meddle with things intended expressly for Mr. Perkins. How was he to dine without pickles, pray? There were none eatable to be got at Kensington, and there was no time to send Tibbs off again to Fortnum's and Masons, for the geese must be already over-done. *Could* Mr. Perkins, for once, eat Indian pickle?

Mr. Perkins, with the most ravenous *empressement*, and a leer almost as hot as the proposed pickles, assured Miss James that he could "heat hanythink; honly," added he, "let it be himmejet, has I ave a patient to see at seven; though I shall not be so remiss as not to return to tea."

Thus re-assured, Miss James postponed all further vengeance about the missing gherkins, and ordered dinner to be brought up directly; while she herself, albeit unused to *con spirito* movements, scaled the back-staircase, like a whirlwind, till she reached the store-room, and there seized a jar of pickles, that

might have suited the palate of his Satanic Majesty himself, who must be an epicure in the pickles of all nations.

I had scarcely time to take off my things, before dinner was announced; and I found that Jemima had by no means exaggerated Mr. Perkins's extraordinary gastronomic *tours de force,* both as to the quantity and quality of his repast. When, however, his hunger had in some degree subsided, under the influence of almost the whole of one goose, nearly an orchard of apple-sauce, and innumerable cataplasms of mustard, Mr. Perkins vanished, and Glauber Rodolphus! appeared. He first asked Miss James to take wine, then Miss Omeny, then Miss Sharpe, and then me, *da capoing* to Miss James; after which, looking tenderly at her, he placed his wide-spread hand impartially upon the front of his waistcoat, not inclining it more to one side than to the other, but preserving a *juste milieu,* and said his "'eart was full;" which I thought a very delicate way of expressing it. A sigh from Miss Omeny (which, however, she had tried to drown in another glass of sherry) reminded him, that if his 'eart was full, the more reason why he should give of its abundance to all: so pantomimically washing his hands, as he spoke, as if to take the wise precaution of being "off with the old love, before he was on with the new," he asked Miss Omeny, in his most emollient voice, if he might ave the pleasure of *assist-*

ing her to some of the *boosom* of the, as yet, uncut goose; and then, before she had time to say yes or no, he added:

"Sweet thing, that 'When thy boosum eaves a sigh,'" and actually began humming it, that the bare pinion of the bird, which he most scientifically amputated, and sent to Miss Omeny, might appear the result of aberration of mind, brought on by musical enthusiasm. It was astonishing the number of ales, wines, and liqueurs, Mr. Perkins was requested by his fair amphytrions to give his opinion of; so that after dinner, by the time a bottle of Claret was produced, (one of six dozen that Miss James had taken in part payment of a bad debt, incurred for the *non*-tuition of a wine-merchant's daughter) and Mr. Perkins was pronouncing it "too thin," his voice became so thick, that it was not very intelligible, especially as at the same time seizing a pear from one dish, and an apple from another, he *à propos de botte*, became polemical and argumentative.

"This ere," said he, tapping the pear approvingly, his the principle hof creation, hall in pairs—hall in pa-i—has Mr. Wilberforce told hus. While this ere willainous concern," he added, fillipping the apple with such vengeance, that it rolled headlong across the table into Miss Omeny's lap, "his the principle of destruction; for has by pairs hall mankind was crehated, so by happles hall mankind was destroyed; that his to say, d—d! For what we have received, the Lord make

hus truly thankful (you told me to sa Grace, did'nt you?) Well, has I was a go—going to hobserve touching pai—that his couples hand coupling—"

"Miss Sedley, you may retire," said Miss James; and right glad was I for the permission, as at that time, I had never seen any one in the disgusting state Mr. Perkins was.

When I got up stairs, Miss Dickens, (whose indisposition I am happy to say, had not increased,) eagerly demanded an account of the day's adventures, which I gave her as soon as Helen and Jessey would let me speak, and I had returned their affectionate greetings. When I narrated the episode of the missing gherkins, Miss Dickens laughed to that degree, that I was afraid she would in reality make herself ill.

"Oh! Miriam," said she, as soon as her laughter would allow her to speak, "I'll never forgive you if you don't write either a poem, an epitaph, or a song, upon the mysterious disappearance of the gherkins, or a parody, beginning—

"Oh where, and oh where,
Are my Rodolph's gherkins gone?"

and dedicate it to Miss James, *without* permission."

"No," said I, laughing, "I think it ought to be something original, in honour of Mr. Perkins;" and I improvised to the tune of "Polly Hopkins," a song which I know was "received with unbounded applause"

at the time, and was so popular, that it became the school-room anthem at Concave House, and was always struck up whenever Miss James or Miss Omeny had appeared, or were about to appear; but at this distance of byegone years, I can only remember the commencement, which opened in the following police-report strain:

> Young ladies, which of you stole the gherkins?
> Oh! which of you say—which of you say?
> Meant for Glauber Rodolphus Perkins,
> On Michaelmas-day—on Michaelmas-day?

That said 29th of September was an eventful night! for how could even an imaginary wall fall down at Seidlitz Lodge, without a sympathetic crash taking place at Concave House. We had been some hours in bed, and yet I could not sleep: the meeting, with Colonel Clavering had roused a whole train of memories which, even if they sometimes slumbered, never slept. Also, the wind was high, and Madame Beccacia was very restless in her bed, which, like an oppressed creature, as it was, groaned and creaked even more than usual, and then it was answered by the wind violently shaking the windows, as if they, being so quiet themselves, were reproaching it for not letting them rest. I heard a neighbouring clock strike three; I also thought I heard the inner door of the washing-room stealthily open, and creak on its hinges; but

this was again of course only the wind, which, like an extensive commercial traveller, as it is, seemed to have business in all directions on this night. Madame Beccacia had just turned heavily in her bed, with her usual obligato accompaniment of groans and sighs; and as one good turn deserves another, I also turned to the side next the wall, to try and overtake sleep there; and at the expiration of another hour, was just about to do so, when a crash, certainly as loud as that of an earthquake would be at Laputa, effectually roused me; and I heard Madame Beccacia announce, in most lugubrious tones, her own extraordinary and triangular demise in the following words:—

"Oh! oh! I am smothered! drowned! and strangled!"

"I hope not," said I, cautiously putting one foot out of bed; "you seem in very good spirits, at all events, for there is a strong smell of brandy!"

"Brandy, indeed! my poor dentifrice! Oh! this has never happened by fair means; and if I live—which I don't expect to do—I'll take care to have the vile perpetrators of this scandalous plot punished as they deserve."

Unfortunately, in those days there were neither vestas nor lucifers (though always plenty of devils), and I had to grope my way to the fireplace to find the bell that rang up into the maids' room; having at length done so, I rang it violently, and then begged of Madame Beccacia not to move till the light came;

for I now clearly perceived that the frustrated *émeute* of the other night had taken place in my absence.

"I am not very likely to move," groaned that unfortunate stout gentlewoman, "when I believe I have come through the school-room ceiling, and am wedged in the rafters, to say nothing of being stuck as full of pieces of broken bottles as a garden wall."

"Good heavens!" cried I, "you don't say so; that is really shocking."

"Ay, those who have done it shall find it shocking; you may depend upon that, Miss Sedley."

"Surely," said I, now seriously alarmed that this jest had been carried farther than anything could warrant, "you don't suppose any one would be so wicked as to hurt you on purpose?"

"I really will do you the justice to say, Miss Sedley, that I don't think you would; but with Jessey Fane, and Helen Penrose, you are the only exception I make in the whole school."

An "Oh! oh! Madame Beccacia, how can you say so?" uprose simultaneously athwart the darkness, from the stanch Protestants among the insurgents.

"I not only say it, but I'll prove it to-morrow, to your costs; and the young lady that's the most silent of all, I suspect the most of all; and that there may be no mistake, I mean Miss Mary Anne Dickens!"

"Me Mem!" said a mincing wolf's voice, in sheep's accents, purporting to be the accused's, but which was

evidently Miss Sherwood's; "what an idea, when I'm so ill."

"Very ill disposed young person, indeed, I always thought you," moaned the wounded Woodcock, actually mutilated, and bruised into repartee for the first time in her life, as crushed roses send up more fragrant odours.

Here Jemima appeared, in a costume that I cannot conscientiously recommend to "British females" in general, or even to opera-dancers in particular, on account of its unbecomingness; as it consisted of a very short, and not very white, flannel petticoat; black worsted stockings, ditto leather shoes, down at heel; a short dimity bed-gown, and a highish crowned night-cap, with a rampart of tightly-rolled cannon-ball curl-papers round the forehead, like Miss Sherwood's, while in her hand she carried an enormous deep round tin candlestick, the tallow candle, in which was now flaring up indignantly, at the cowardly and unequal assaults of twenty different currents of air, Jemima's red right hand being the only mortal thing that had sufficient chivalry in it, to stand between it and them.

"What hever hon hearth, hin the name of Perkins and hall the 'pothecaries, his the matter?" said she, now throwing herself into the *mêlée;* but before any one could reply, save by a mosaic of ill-suppressed titters from behind the dimity curtains of the sixteen small tester beds, Miss Gannet turned her eyes upon

the immediate scene of the catastrophe, and then once more burst forth with "Well, I never! did hanybody hever? Why there you lays, Madam Beckhatchyou, like a wreck a-shore, hand, hat the same time, like a wessel just launched, with a bottle of brandy smashed agin your figure-head!"

Jemima's description was pretty accurate; for the sacking had been so insidiously cut as to give way on the outer side, and so precipitate Madame Beccacia forward in such a manner, that she must infallibly upset the small, and somewhat ricketty chest of drawers in her fall, which, being old, and loose, opened, as they fell, the dentifrice coming in violent contact with her, and the indignant bottle dashing itself from the Tarpeian rock of her forehead, from whence it rebounded in countless fragments on the floor.

"For Heaven's sake, help me up, Jemima," moaned poor Madame Beccaccia, staunching a slight wound on her forehead, as she further deposed that she believed she was bleeding to death.

"Here," said Jemima, stooping down, and steeping an unfolded pocket-handkerchief, that had fallen from one of the drawers, in the stream of Cognac that still flowed, and making an attempt to apply it to Madame Beccaccia's head, who, however, drew back in horror, "there haint nothink better than brandy for a wound hof any sort."

"Brandy!" groaned Madame; "it's not brandy; it's dentifrice; the stuff I use for my teeth.'

"Well, hit's hall the same," persisted Jemima; "hand whathever his good for the teeth, hit stands to reason, must be good for the ead; that his, has long has there's a tooth hin it."

But even this scientific analysis of comparative anatomy could not induce Madame Beccaccia to smart any more, as she thought she was smarting quite enough from the application of the dentifrice already. So with Jemima's assistance, I began excavating the unhappy sufferer from her encumbered estate; which, not being a Whig measure, was a great relief to her, and saved her from, instead of effecting her ruin.

As poor Madame Beccaccia's forehead still continued to bleed, after she had been raised up, and set upon her feet, Jemima again expressed her sentiments:

"Lor, a-mercy! what a squash to be sure! here will be a raising of the ouse; and a sending hoff for Glauber Rodolphus. You better sit down, Um, hon Miss Sedley's bed; for you goes all wiggle-waggle still; quite shook like, with the fall."

"Just light my candle," groaned the wounded bird; "and then Miss Sedley, my dear, would you have the goodness to go down with Jemima? Wake Miss James, and beg of her to come up here; for I am determined that she shall herself investigate the piece of wickedness."

Having covered Madame Beccaccia with a shawl,

we departed on our embassy; for Miss James slept on the ground floor, in a small room overlooking the garden.

"Embower'd in the shade that the passion flowers twined."

As we crossed the hall, the dining-room door was open; Jemima gave a slight scream, and caught hold of my arm.

"What on earth is the matter?" asked I.

"Look! look! Miss; I could be sworn as I see Perkins (though I let him out myself at eleven o'clock) crossing the dining-room;" as she spoke the wind blew the door to.

"Nonsense!" said I, laughing. "The fact is, Mr. Perkins is here so much, that I suppose the rooms have got a look of him, just as women's bonnets and men's hats certainly do grow like them."

"Then we'll get a look of him too, hif he's in the ouse!" cried Jemima, valiantly flinging open the dining-room door, where the effigy of Mr. Perkins was certainly visible to a certain extent; for, perpendicularly placed in one corner of the square sofa was his umbrella, and on the top of it, his hat, and these it was, that had occasioned Jemima's optical illusion.

"Humph!" said the latter, putting her left arm a-kimbo, and shaking the tin candlestick deprecatingly at the hat, "where hever there his a at, there should be a ead!"

"Not surely, in this instance, Jemima; for it would be rather uncomfortable, I should think, stuck on the top of an umbrella!"

"De-pend upon it, there's a somethink! Does it stand to reason that a man, or heven a pothecary, should go hout of a night has his a-blowing blacksmith's bellows, hand leave his at home behind him?"

"Not to reason, certainly, but to the want of it; for it is very natural, I should think, for a man to lose his hat after he has lost his head, which I can bear witness to Mr. Perkins having done at a very early hour last evening."

"Perkins lose his ead!" echoed Jemima, snapping her fingers with ineffable contempt. "When did he ave one to lose, I should like to know? Lose his happetite he might, though hI can witness, hand so can the wittles, that he never as lost it yet in this ouse; but, as for losing his ead!—no, no; the thing's an unpossibility! Mark my words, there's a somethink!"

"Not in Mr. Perkins's head, surely, Jemima!"

Miss Gannet, now taking the candlestick in her left hand, shook the fore-finger of her right hand at Mr. Perkins's hat and umbrella, and, passing on, gave so loud and startling a knock with one end of the iron snuffers on Miss James's bed-room door, that it never could have been equalled before or since, except by Jupiter in a storm, or a London footman in the season, in the days of those nerve-nuisances, knockers, which,

thank Heaven, modern good taste has exploded, except for the vulgar, who adopt that sort of "appeal to the public," as the only means left to them of making a noise in the world. Poor Miss James, not being dead, soon answered this gentle summons, and, slipping on a dressing-gown and shawl, prepared to accompany us up stairs, stopping, however, *en route,* before Mr. Perkins's casquet and shield, *vulgo,* hat and umbrella, and with clasped hands, making a sort of Andromacha soliloquy over it, the purport of which was, that he had gone without them, and would get his death of cold.

"Like enough," growled Jemima, who was bringing up the rear; "has he's sure halways to take what hever *he can get.*"

As soon as Miss James had condoled with Madame Beccaccia, each of the young ladies underwent a midnight review, or rather court-martial, but, like the two thieves in Æsop's fable of the "Cook Shop," all took refuge in an equivocation, one saying: "I did not plan the mischief;" and another: "I did not do it." At length Madame Beccaccia, with gigantic strength (considering her recent wounds and loss of blood), flung the pin that united Miss Dickens's curtains on the ground exclaiming:

"Here, Mem, you'll find the real culprit!"

"But, alas! like many other prophecies, though true in spirit, this was false in substance, for the bed was tenantless, and on the pillow was a note addressed to Miss James. Madame Beccaccia's arms fell motionless

by her sides, and, altogether, she appeared even more stunned than by her fall, while Miss James read out the following note from Miss Dickens, which abounded in those elegancies of diction and style which that young lady had acquired during a four years' course of English literature at Concave House. Poor Miss James! it fell from her hand towards the conclusion, and I picked it up, and read to myself the remainder:

"Dear Miss James,

"It would be useless at the present moment to enter into the particulars of my engagement to my dear Algernon, nor am *I going to.* I know you have been in love with Mr. Perkins for many years, and therefore must have felt *just like I did,* and so will, I hope, instead of being angry at the step I have taken, *help me* excuse it to Pa and Ma, brothers and sisters, of whom, thank heaven! I am quite independent in point of fortune, and consequently free to act as I like; for, as I have often heard you say, money is might all the world over. My love to Ma and Tilly, as I know *Ma and her* are coming on Tuesday. Tell them Algernon is everything I could wish, and so indeed are all his brother officers, who have given us every assistance in their power. I hope Mr. Perkins won't fret about his gherkins, but I took them, thinking they would be better than what we should get on the road. Put them down in my bill, *please:* and tell Mr. Perkins I'll send him some more, and also some marmalade from dear

Scotland, half way to which I hope to be before you receive this. I only hope your affair with Mr. Perkins may end as happily. But I don't know what to wish for poor Miss Omeny, as Glauber Rodolphus, not being a spread eagle, you know can't marry you both; so you see it is neck or nothing! only don't believe that bam of Mrs. P. the first, being still alive, but make a dead set at Perkins at once, which is the advice of yours,

"Thank Heaven! for the last time
"MARY ANNE DICKENS.
"(Soon to be FITZ PIPECLAY.")

Poor Miss James's hysterics on this occasion were real, as she felt that even in sending Miss Dickens's vulgar and unfeeling letter to her parents, she was only doubly publishing the disgrace of Concave House. The hat and umbrella on the dining-room sofa turned out to be Lieutenant Fitz Pipeclay's, whose name figured in the inside of the hat, and also an amber-coloured silk handkerchief.

"Lor! how beautiful it do smell to be sure! wery different from Perkins's!" said Jemima, burying her face in the handkerchief.

And yet both Mr. and Mrs. Algernon Fitz Pipeclay continued to be *en très mauvaise odeur* in Miss James's "Establishment" for many a long day after.

CHAPTER V.

It was a gloomy, miserable, November day, half fog, half frost; not unlike an amalgamation of the English character; and I was sitting at one of the school-room windows begging alms of Heaven for sufficient light to read "The Heart of Mid-Lothian" by, when a loud ring came to the gate. In a school, like a prison or a cloister, everything is an event, for hope's couriers always come at full speed, upon the unusual or the vague. My book was instantly closed upon poor Jenny Dean's kneeling to the Queen, and my eyes rivetted upon the window; in a very short time, Tibbs the ubiquitous! came running to open the great gates, and a shabby-looking yellow chariot, with unmistakeably jobbed and jaded horses, and a coachman to match, drove in; a servant, evidently not a London

one, in a drab livery with red facings, and plush-breeches, sitting beside him.

The carriage drove up to the door, the servant dismounted and rang the bell; Jemima came to the door. I did not hear who the servant asked for, but seeing two gentlemen in the carriage, I did not much suppose it was for me; however, the window was now let down, the door opened, and the steps lowered, and out jumped a flagrantly bad style of looking man, with a very red face, an unrecovered tract of whisker, his hat on one side, a braided surtout lined with fur, large silver spurs, and a heavy silver-mounted hunting-whip, which he stuck into his right-hand pocket as he held out his hand to assist his companion to alight, who did so very infirmly, leaning heavily on the frogged sleeve of the surtout, his hand trembling violently the while. Of this personage's face I could see little, as a shawl came up all round his mouth and chin, but the little I did see was very pale, and his hair rather long and perfectly white, which led me to suppose he was a very old man. They entered, and thinking it could not be for me, I turned from the window with a sigh, and returned to poor Jenny Deans; but in my haste to watch the arrival, I had very foolishly not noted the place where I had left her, and was now hunting through the whole book to find her, when the door opened and Jemima appeared, saying:

"Please, Miss Sedley, you are wanted in the parlour, to see two gentlemen."

"You had better let Miss James know," said I; for ever since Miss Dickens's elopement, we were never allowed to give even Mrs. Quince an audience without Miss James in person being present, which must have been a sad tax upon the course of Natural Philosophy with Mr. Perkins.

"Oh! Miss James is down a-ready," responded Jemima. My heart now began to beat violently, I thought the two persons I had seen might bring me some tidings of my poor father; for my intuition was on the track of an Irish cousin—that wilderness of uncultivated whisker, the flagrant partiality of the hat to the right ear, the long spurs, and the swampy surtout overrun with frogs—yes, yes, the whole achievement "gave the world assurance" of a Clanfuddle Brummel, but who could the other be? perhaps—and here followed a long string of quickly rejected perhapses, till I came to this most plausible one of all, that perhaps even the frogs and hairs might be mortgaged, and that the old gentleman (the only person who ever does look after Irish property!) was the mortgagee, come to keep an eye upon them. I locked up "The Heart of Mid-Lothian" in one of those little cross-barred, red leather school-trunks, which, like that other unfathomed mystery, a school-boy's pocket, holds more, all in containing less, than any similar space in the habitable globe.

I went down hastily, yet tremblingly, I did not know why, nor wherefore, except it was that those dark

rugged shadows that we call presentiments, with which Fate sometimes strews our inner world, shake the spirit quite as much in its passage over them, as the roughest roads in life's highway do the body. When Jemima flung open the dining-room door, Miss James was sitting dangerously on the edge of her chair, very perpendicular with her arms crossed, and her lips compressed; and no wonder, when so staunch a Protestant beheld the terribly Popish discipline, the gentleman in the bush—I mean the whiskers—was subjecting her innocent square horse-hair sofa to; for had it been the wearer of a hair shirt, it could not have received more violent flagellation, than that individual was now administering to one of its sides (over which his right arm hung) with the before-mentioned hunting-whip, while his left leg was luxuriously elongated upon the seat, with all the consummate ease of an old and perfectly welcome acquaintance; his hat and gloves doing the amiable the while to the Tunbridge work-box upon the Pembroke table, to Miss James's ineffable horror, who plainly perceived that the said work-box, alas! unlike the donor, Mr. Perkins, was coming to the scratch!

The elder or rather old man with the white hair, was standing with his back to the fire, and his hands behind his back, occasionally addressing some short sentence to Miss James, in a brief tone, and decidedly Irish accent, without its amounting to a brogue; this was evidently meant for conversation, as deeds, not words, appeared to be his companion's device, who,

during the castigation of the sofa, kept looking at the pictures and furniture round the room, and whistling (doubtless as an appropriate air) that charming *chansonnette* of "Dennis Brulgruthry," which so graphically describes the *ameublement* of the hero's cabin :—

> "My cabin was filled, though not very big,
> Wid powlthry and pictures,
> Three chairs and a pig."

As I entered the room, the elder stranger made two hasty steps forward, as if to meet me.

"Oh! murder, Man! fair play, or it's no bet: the voice of nathur was to spake," roared the individual in frogs, from the sofa, starting to his feet, and barring his companion's passage by placing his brawny arm before him. "Miss Miriam Sedley, my dear," continued he, "won of us two has the honour of being your father; which, the natheral failings of a daughther will, or ought, to decide—rightly, I hope, for the honour of the Sedleys; for every father likes to have a wise child" (and here he winked furiously at his companion); "however, my dear, all I can say is, that if you should make a mistake, and rush into the wrong arems, as far as I am concerned, from me heart I'll forgive you."

I became faint and sick at this address; my limbs trembled; the room went round; everything swam before my eyes. Was I dying?—was I dead? Oh! no, certainly not! Such intense suffering! the bitter

agony of a whole past and future life distilled, in a concentrated essence, into that one dreadful and overburdened moment was a too strong proof that I lived! But surely—surely that disgusting man could not be my father, if either of them were? The very doubt seemed salvation! I turned slowly round, dreading the investigation I had to make, yet feeling that it must be made. When I raised my eyes, I felt no disgust, thank God! but still, on the other hand, I felt nothing impel me forward, or tell me that, that poor palsied-looking being was *my* father, who, in years at least, was not much past forty; whereas the person before me looked considerably past sixty. All this, though long to write, was instantaneous in thought. Oh! most assuredly it was not the age, nor the white hair, that kept me back, for I loved all old men with white hair, for the sake of the *one* who in my heart was the type of all. What was it, then? I'm afraid it was the slovenly appearance, the look of premature decay, and the trembling hands; but presently I saw a tear overflow that dim, unconscious eye, and roll silently down the colourless cheek: and then I heard my own name pronounced, very faintly; and the voice that uttered it trembled, too. I did not hesitate any longer; how could I? for the voice, though feeble, was very kind. I don't know about nature, as she had been fast asleep till now; but I do know that memory has a whispering gallery in every heart, through which the faintest and most distant breath of

kindness vibrates more distinctly than the loudest call of the step-dame, Duty.

"Oh! it *is* you, dear papa," said I, rushing forward, and bursting into tears, as I threw my arms round his neck.

"Yes, it is my little Fairy Mirry's own poor papa—my dear, darling Mirry, my good child, who has not forgotten her poor old sea-weed of a father, though they did leave him to perish on his rock."

"No! no! dear papa, not to perish; God won't let you perish, for He knows, if you don't, how your poor little Mirry has prayed for you every night and morning, on her knees, and sometimes all day long, in her heart, since the night she left you."

"Don't say the night *you* left me, child; you'd never have left me. The night those two devils stole you out of your father's house—ay, and worse still, out of your mother's house—for you had a mother once, my poor Mirry——"

And he tottered to the sofa, and tore off the shawl that was round his throat, and flung it vehemently from him. I knelt at his feet, and kissed his poor trembling hands, as I burst into a fresh paroxysm of tears; for I don't know when I had been so happily unhappy a long time. My father took up masses of my hair in both his hands, and cried over it as he kissed it.

"See, Tom," said he, turning to his horrible companion, "what soft, silken, loving hair it is; as if it

was meant to build nests for all the broken spirits and wounded hearts in the world! Just like her poor mother's, and not the less like, because her mother's belongs to an angel now."

"'Pon my soul!" said the animal designated by the generic name of Tom, as he applied to his bleared, red eyes a crimson silk handkerchief almost as red, "I don't know when I've sane anything so purty as the whole scane, my dear Godfrey, since I was at the thayeter and saw the "Gracian Daughter;" and be dad! you've won your bet, and I'll pay you like a gentleman, and drink my purty cousin's health to boot. Six dozen of Chambertin vintage, 1811, with a dash of the comet's tail in it, and no mistake; and now, Ma'am," continued he, addressing Miss James, "I'll trouble you to order Miss Sedley's things to be packed up, for *me* cousin Godfrey, Misther Sedley, her father here, I see is in no state to attend to business, and small blame to him: it's not every day a man finds such a daughter. I declare, I meself (though, of course, the parental failings only flow in my busum in a collateral line) am quite entirely upset by it a thousand times more than I ever was by the worst inn's fifth bottle of worst port."

"Pray, Sir, may I ask," said Miss James, hastily brushing away a solitary tear that was beginning to exhale on the lash of her right eyelid, "to whom I have the honour of speaking?"

"Tom Lutron, Ma'am, at your or any other lady's

service, for I always prefer small change for ladies of a certain age; that is, two twenties for one forty, or four fifteeners for a dowager of sixty, and so on upwards. Let me see whether I've a pasteboard about me," and he searched all his pockets; "Divil a one! but the precise address is 'Tom Lutron, Bally Bluster, County Galway, Ireland.'"

"Any relation to Lord Lutron, may I inquire?" interrogated Miss James.

"His brother, Ma'am, or I should say, worse luck, his younger brother, that is, to the present man, for the old people never had the civility to consult my wishes on the subject, or I should have infinitely preferred a handle to my name, and a good cellar, which is hereditary at Mount Lutron, to merely having Bally Bluster, a handle to the pump, and not even a key to the cellar."

"Then I have the honour of speaking to the Hon. Mr. Lutron," said Miss James relapsing into her normal state of vulgarity.

"Why, as to that, Ma'am, it's more what the French term a *titre d'occasion*, or what we call a travelling title."

"What then, Sir," said poor Miss James, completely mystified, "are you not always the Honourable Mr. Lutron?"

"Always, Ma'am, when I put my name to a bill; that is, when a bill from a tradesperson is made out in my name; but when the same tradesman forgets him-

self, and what's due (not to himself, no fear of their doing that), but to a gentleman, and—ahem! a Lutron! and a man of my standing! (in his books), Ma'am, and degenerates into a dun, and wants to put his name to the same bill, in the shape of what's vulgarly called a receipt; then the rascals pretend, Ma'am, that I am no longer the Honourable man they took me for; I should say, mistook me for," and at the conclusion of this speech he winked at me, as my poor father's face was leaning on my head.

"I am extremely sorry, Sir, but it is my rule to consider that no one has authority to remove a young lady from my establishment but the individual who pays for them; and though placed here by Mrs. Marley, I have always received the remittances for Miss Sedley's board and tuition through Sir George Paulett's bankers."

"Why, d—n it, Madam," cried my father, starting up, "surely you are not going to come Mrs. Marley and Miss Paulett over me, and dispute my right to my own child!"

"Far from it, Sir," replied Miss James, with the most iced-water placidity. "I merely mean to say that Miss Sedley cannot quit my establishment until her account is settled; for, were I to allow her to do so, I should have no claim upon Sir George Paulett for any further payment. I assure you, Sir, this is nothing personal to you. A few years ago, a little girl was placed under my charge by her father, whom I knew

to be an immoral and bad man in every sense of the word; he, however, left strict orders that his wife, whom he had turned out of his house, should never see her child; the poor lady came one day almost distracted to implore that I would let her see her little girl, but I told her I really dared not, as her father paid for her. You understand, Sir, it was nothing personal to her, for I had nothing to do with her and her husband's differences, except that I really was very sorry for her, knowing her to have been very ill-used; but I could not act otherwise as he paid me. It was the same when years after it pleased God to release this poor little sufferer: the poor mother made another, a last attempt to see her child on her death-bed, Dr. Marshall Killall turned her out of the house because ordered to do so by her husband, who paid him; so of course he was obliged to do what he ordered; he need not, perhaps, have done it quite so brutally; but then people can only act according to their nature."

"And pray was not this disgrace to humanity—I mean the brute of a doctor's employer—publicly hooted and kicked out of society?" said my father.

"Oh, dear, no Sir, for he's a rich man. I don't mean to say that ladies and gentlemen go to his house, but low authors, members of the press, actresses, and those sort of people do."

"They must be a precious set of blackguards who would herd with such a man," cried my father.

"Well, Sir, you see, with lies and money, a man

in this country will always get plenty to support him."

"Then more shame for the country," cried my father warmly.

"My dear Godfrey," said Tom Lutron, "don't excite yourself; it only proves what I always told you, that except for money and self-interest the English have no more hearts than petrified cricket balls; indeed, I don't doubt but the cricket balls have the more feeling of the two, for they, poor things, have been well kicked. And now, Ma'am, to come to the affections of the nation—I mean the L. S. D.—how much do your 'demands upon Sir George Paulett for Miss Miriam Sedley amount to?"

"There is only half a quarter due, Sir, which would be just thirty-seven pounds ten shillings; and with the few extras that Miss Sedley has incurred, as nearly as I can calculate without my books, it might be about thirty-nine pounds ten shillings."

"Then be so good as to get your books, Ma'am, and let me know the amount to the uttermost farthing, as I wish to convey to you a high idea of the understanding of Miss Sedley's relations; and to look through a microscope at half a farthing before one parts with it is, I am aware, the only way by which one can get credit for sense in this country."

Miss James needed no entreaties, but went instantly for her books.

"What on earth are you going to do, Tom?" asked my father.

"Do—why get your daughter, that pledge of your affection there, out of pawn; you're not going to leave my pretty coz any more with that old Fin an haddock of a looking vestal that has just left the room, I hope?"

"But didn't you hear her say that she would not give her up except to Sir George Paulett?" said my poor father, with a deep sigh and a painfully cowed look; for it was too merely physical to be dignified with the name of resignation.

"I heard no such thing, my dear Godfrey, but quite the reverse—that she'd give her up to nothing but the pounds, shillings, and pence; for she expounded the law of the land beautifully, and proved that the very devil would have right and might on his side if he paid for it; as you know, I'm not much addicted to paying, but still, once in a way, I don't mind playing the very devil with their infamous laws, and be d—d to them!"

"But the money, Tom? I haven't so much about me."

"I have."

"You!"

"Yes; fifty pounds that I was going to pay Schultz the tailor with."

"I'm very much obliged to you, very, my dear Tom; but what will Schultz do?"

"Wait—he's used to it."

Miss James returned after about ten minutes' absence. Upon second thoughts (besides the severe winter I had been made to pass with Thomson), she had thought fit to make me pay a shilling a-day "forfeit" for one month, for having lost my watch, so that my "little account" amounted to forty-one pounds ten shillings, as she said she had not charged anything for carriage hire, the day she took me to hear Mr. Wilberforce speak at Turnham Green, although she had insisted upon paying Mr. Perkins for the carriage. I have remarked that it is part of the commercial system of England, after any flagrant piece of extortion, to point out the forbearance that has been exercised towards you on the part of the extortioner, and how much more they might but for their kind forbearance have cheated you—a mode of consolation eminently calculated to impress upon a well-regulated mind, that "there is nothing so bad but it might have been worse," which may be termed the elixir of Job's comforters.

"Packing up," considering the extent of my worldly possessions at that time, was a more nominal ceremony, not so the parting with Helen and Jessy; but it was my fate apparently to have my heart uprooted from everything it clung to as soon as it had taken root. These sort of limpet hearts are foolish things, for attach themselves as they will, they are sure to find that it is only to the rock of disappointment after all,

and that sooner or later they must be severed from that to which they have grown; whereas your fair, smooth, water-lily sort of natures, that float in space and are attached to nothing, sport in the waters of life, letting the waves which succeed each other pass over them without regret, and so bloom on fresh and unfettered to the last. However, the time I lost in crying with poor Helen and Jessy, I made up for by the brevity of my adieux to the rest of "the young ladies;" nor did those to the teachers cause much further delay, except that Miss Sharpe followed me to the head of the stairs, and with much wriggling, and blushing, and hesitation, said:

"I hope, Miss Sedley, you will leave me your address, as I shall of course repay you some day. *I intend to,* I assure you, and—"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, no more on that subject, my dear Miss Sharpe," said I, breaking away from her, and running hastily down stairs.

Five minutes after, I was seated Bodkin in the old yellow chariot between my father and Tom Lutron; and I could not well say what I felt, except that my heart was so big, and so full of misery, that I had not room to feel this misery in all its details; for paralysis is the mercy of despair. When I saw Jemima put her apron to her eyes, and poor Tibbs bow down to the ground for the half-guinea I had given him, and heard the great gates of "Concave House" close on me for ever! After the carriage had cleared them, I tried to feel

glad, but the effort only brought sufficient circulation to my poor numbed, heavy heart to make me comprehend in one pang what an unnatural, false, and exceptional position was mine. At seventeen, to again meet my father in a mystery, and a hurry, as I had been taken from him years before, only to feel that in finding a parent, I was indeed alone and unprotected on the wide, cold world. All my affections were planted, and pining elsewhere. All my tastes and habits were formed; and so, alas! were his, and both were wide as the poles asunder. Woe! woe! woe! to that perverse soul, be it that of parent, guardian, friend, or foe, which brands any human being with the foul and cruel wrong of a false and defenceless position, as it has entailed a hydra curse upon its victim, which time may increase, but cannot diminish; therefore let it not think that it, the evil-doer, shall go unscathed—no, verily! all who sow desolation shall reap it, piled-up and pressed-down, good measure, from God's great granary of retribution, where every wrong is garnered, and will be winnowed by His unerring justice.

A foggy drive through the Park, Oxford Street, and Bond Street, brought us to a dingy lodging in Maddox Street, nearly at the corner of George Street, at the other end of which, Sir Joseph Paulett had a fine house, looking into Hanover Square, and crammed with trophies of his conquests in Spain; namely, Velasquez, Murilos, Sartos, and the massive gold and silver spoils of convents. My father had slept

nearly the whole way to town, as if overpowered by unusual exertion; and Tom Lutron had tried to make himself agreeable by making himself as disagreeable as possible—not an uncommon mistake with some men. Maurice, my father's old butler at Castle Sedley, whose name, at least, Nelly had preserved in my memory, opened the door. Great were the clasping of hands, and the tears, the poor man indulged in on seeing me, and the blessings he showered upon me. He too looked terribly infirm and old; he said it was the rheumatism.

"Sure, Miss, I do be on de rack wid it," said he. But to judge by his face, I greatly feared it was the bottle-rack he suffered from. On entering that smoky, gloomy, dirty abode, redolent as it was with concentrated odours of cats, punch, smoke, onions, and opodeldoc, I felt as if all the elasticity of spirit I ever possessed had been lost in the fog, and it, and I, should never meet again. My father leant on me on one side, and the bannister on the other; and, after a slow journey of easy stages, resting at each landing, we reached the drawing-room, where the fumes were of another kind, being those of defunct whisky-punch and cigars, which not even the purifying flames of the blazing fire, which Maurice now stirred, could mitigate. For a London lodging, I don't believe the rooms were very small, but they appeared so to me; and next to little minds, I do detest little rooms, for their confined and stinted atmosphere seems to narrow, compress, and

vulgarize one's every feeling. My father's bed-room was next the sitting-room (which Maurice dignified with the name of the drawing-room) he now went into it to be down before dinner, as he said; and Maurice coming in at the same time to lay the cloth in the sitting-room, fully explained its delightful perfumes.

"You see, Miss," said the latter, thinking it necessary to give some explanation of this anomaly, "it's too much trouble for the masther to be getting up and down stairs; so he and Masther Tom dine here quiet and sociably just."

"Is there any bed-room for me, Maurice?" asked I in a faint voice, not knowing how far the peculiar domestic arrangements might extend; or rather how limited they might be.

"Indade is there, Miss Miriam!" replied he, with a very knowing look; "and I don't think Quane Charlotte has a better; but for that matter, much worse, by raison of the ugly ould phiz she's compelled to see in her looking-glass, which won't be your case, Miss."

And flinging open the door with a great air, he preceded me up the second flight of stairs, where, taking a key out of his pocket, he gave such a thundering *réveillée* at the door, that any uninitiated person would have thought that he had studied hall-door pugilism, under a London footman, all his life. The door was immediately opened, and a vision, strange yet familiar,

met my view. A woman on duty (evidently as lady's-maid), in a bright plum-coloured twilled silk dress, quite new, and well made, with a clear muslin apron, and a high tulle French cap, with pink ribbons, very elaborate as they were then worn.

"Why, Nelly!"—but no, it could not be, for a distant and respectful curtesy, was the only reply, till Maurice thought fit to close the door, when Nelly, for it was Nelly, *quand même!* flung herself in the old style, on her knees, seized my hands, covered them with kisses, and burst into tears. I raised her, of course, and kissed her; and then standing at a little distance, as one does to admire any work of art, I exclaimed:

"Why, Nelly, you *are* 'grand to see!'"

Nelly shook her head, shut her eyes, placed her forefinger on her lip, and said: "Hush!" after which she added, with a sigh of relief: "De Lord be good to us; but I didn't know wheder de masther would succeed in getting you!"

"But even if you had been quite sure of it, Nelly, you need not have made yourself so splendid to receive me. I take it rather as a reproach; for don't you suppose that I should have been quite as glad to see you in any dress, even the dear old purple and orange cotton, to say nothing of the brown beaver bonnet, of stormy memory?"

"It's not dat, me darlint, I know you would," said Nelly, looking awfully solemn, and alarmingly wise; "but you see, deresh, Morrish and Pat Dowling, de

futman, who knowd you since you was dat high ; and if I did not make meself a little grand on your account, to show what was jue to you, and how you ought to be trated, now that you are a fine grown young lady, de likes of them might be putting deir come hither, upon you, on account of ould times, and that would never do. Besides, I had to go for one or two tings for you to de fine big scinted soap shop, in Bond Strate ; and dat all de tings might be of de best, as you'de always bane used to. I said dey was for Missh Shedley, and shure it wudn't do for Missh Shedley's maid to look like an ould apple-ooman, or Mrs. Jiff's, de tobacconist of Flate Strate itself !"

Poor Nelly ! always the same unselfish, devoted creature : whether the sacrifice was to be her last crust in a shipwreck, or her first earnings in trade. I now looked round the room at her preparations ; and as far as the place would admit, nothing could be nicer. The toilet was a perfect oasis in the desert, so white and so fresh did the white sprigged muslin look over the pink lining, and so prettily had she draped the looking-glass with white net, tied with pink ribbons. So far so well ; but when I saw, not only all the perfumes, pommades, and amandines, she had bought, but also the pretty French china things, with roses and forget-me-nots on them, to put them in, I really was annoyed in the midst of all my gratitude, which was as sincere as her kindness was great.

"Oh, Nelly, Nelly ! you wicked woman."

"Why wud I be a wicked woman, darlint?"

"To get me so many things when I'm so poor now, and can't afford them."

"And who wants you to affoord dem? It's very hard if I can't do what I like wid me own, widout being called to account for it."

"But you must be called to account, Nelly, and well scolded, too; for beggars have no right to anything, and that is what I have now the pleasure of finding that I am; and Heaven only knows when I shall be able to pay for all these things."

"Pay for dem! pay me! Oh! fie, Miss Miriam, I didn't tink you'd be de child to stick such a sharp ugly word as dat in poor Nelly's heart, in her ould age. Next, I suppose, you'll be talking of paying de masther for what his own child ates, for I blave it's what them English does," and poor Nelly burst into one of her old aboriginal roars, and utterly oblivious of the new plum-coloured silk gown (and my dignity!), sat down upon a cane chair, and rocked herself to and fro. I threw my arm round her neck, and soon made the *amende honorable*, by a promise (not) to pay, and a further assurance that I would, moreover, learn to take snuff, and cultivate a crop of noses that might have the pleasure of emptying her canisters, without ever filling her till. Peace being restored, I perceived, not without a slight shudder, that the arrangement of the rooms was the same as below, and that this one opened into another.

"Who sleeps in the next room, Nelly? I hope not that horrid Mr. Lutron."

"He did sleep dere, Missh; but, as soon as he and de masther turned deir backs dis morning, I soon shuck (shook) his thraps out of dat, and drifted him down schtairs; and now I schleep dere meself."

And as Nelly walked to the fire-place for the kettle, to pour some warm water into the basin for me, she flung open the door, to let me see that she had taken possession.

"Oh, thank you, Nelly. Then you are going to stay with me?"

"To be sure, I am. It's long enough dey've kep me from you."

"But how will poor Jeffs like your being away from him?"

"Stick him up wid likes! but indade I've nothing to say agin him. For a man, he's a dacent, quite bidable, well-behaved cracher, as ever was; and I toult him he might do ash he plaished, and go and coom in de houshe as fray as de cat while I wash away."

"Well, that really was kind of you, Nelly," said I, laughing.

"Oh, I hope you don't tink dat I alwaysh let him have hish way, Missh," said Nelly, accepting the compliment in the most unsuspicious manner; "but too tight lacing don't do for man or baste."

"Especially for poor Jeffs, I should think, who might miss stays. But how did you find out Papa was

in London, or how did he find you out, Nelly?" said I, as I seated myself before the glass, and she began brushing my hair; during which operation she gave me a long and minute detail of how Morrish had found her out; for the telegraphic process by which the Irish discover each other, whether they herd in St. Giles's or St. James's, is as curious and mysterious as everything else appertaining to that ill-fated people.

"How terribly broken poor Papa is, Nelly!"

"You may say dat, Miss; but sure it's a comfort to you dat God's let you pick up de fragments itself;" and poor Nelly passed the back of her hand hastily across her eyes, and then we relapsed into silence, for I believe we were both thinking the same thoughts; and, to use a homely simile, but one not less apposite on that account, as there are some tissues so old and tender, that they will not bear the needle, and therefore cannot be mended—so are there some feelings so hopelessly sensitive, that they will not bear the probe of words, and are therefore never uttered.

Never shall I forget the horrors of that first dinner, in that dirty, dingy lodging. My father ate little or nothing, although or perhaps because the table was groaning with food; nor was the dinner, beyond its terrible quantity, bad; for Tom Lutron, who always seemed to have the fear of famine before his eyes, would not be at the mercy of a lodging-house cuisine, ordered it daily from the Thatched House, in St. James's Street. But then the whole table looked so

piggy and disgusting, with all sorts of cruets, pickle-jars, and sauce-bottles; and although (considering Mr. Lutron's chiromantic mode of feeding) they would have been more than usually necessary, there were neither napkins nor finger-glasses, but each dinner-plate had an only child, in the shape of a cheese-plate, appended to it. At first, I wondered why; but as Tom Lutron cut his way through the alps of food before him, the mystery was elucidated by pyramids of potatoe-skins rising proudly upon the junior plate, something after the barbaric fashion of certain South Sea cannibals, who, after a plentiful meal, make trophies of the skins of their victims.

But the after-dinner was the really horrible part, for, not content with a multiplicity of wines, that might have sufficed Silenas, whisky-punch was the crowning abomination; and before ten o'clock, my poor father was carried by Maurice and Dowling to bed, in a state too painful and disgusting to witness; while the swine, instead of succumbing, became ruddy and rampant in his horrible companion, and with difficulty I made my escape upstairs, where, after being exhausted with the bitter, burning tears of despair, which, like the treacherous sprinkling of water on a fierce fire, instead of subduing, render it more intense, and unsolaced even by prayer, I passed the remainder of that miserable night in pouring out my heart to Grace, and telling her where our poor father was, under the seal of secrecy; for I knew he would never

forgive her or me, if my aunts discovered his retreat; but I added, that Monsieur de Maillepré had better lose no time in asking his consent, or I feared, even if his life continued, his intellect, or rather the wretched remnant he had left, could not hold out much longer; and, painful as the task was, she had better explain this to Monsieur de Maillepré.

The next morning, I cannot say that my resignation was increased, or my disgust diminished, I escaped Tom Lutron and the morning fog by breakfasting in my own room; but, by twelve, I took my father in his breakfast.

Morning never yet dawned on horrors, without making them more horrible; but when horrors happen to be duties, we should not shrink from them. It was some seconds before he sufficiently collected his ideas to remember me. Oh, it was very dreadful! I cried like a child—and so I ought, for I was his child; and, alas! he was my father!

If the dramas of real life could be written, the unsuspected tragedies of many breasts be laid bare, again would the heavens weep one overwhelming flood, and Nature's great universal heart would break in self-defence, beneath so dire a load. And this, thought I, as I gazed at my poor father's pale, insentient eyes, is the work of temper—the deadly fruits of unchecked ignorance!

My father's mother was a silly woman, who indulged him in everything, and corrected him in no-

thing; my aunt's mother a virago, who ill-used and neglected them; and before me lay the miserable results of both their sins; for in education, precepts, however good, are nothing—the mere wind, that bloweth where it listeth; but example is the soil upon whose goodness or badness depends the nature of the crops that shall spring from it. The D— himself, I have no doubt, quotes Scripture to the numerous younger branches of his family; and maxim-mongers —that is, writers upon education—have never been wanted, from Jean-Jacques and his sentimental, scoundrel school, down to the petrifying Utilitarian charlatans of own our day, who are for regenerating all the world but *one*, and that the one who most needs it, namely, *number one!*

Neither is it even the really practical philanthropists who in person visit prisons and penitentiaries, that are good trainers of youth, for in devoting their whole time to these national nurseries of crime, they must of necessity neglect their own nurseries. It may appear very narrow-minded in this age of progress, diffusion, and above all, of pretension, but I am convinced that could things be so managed, as to have a Squire Allworthy, a Vicar of Wakefield, a Lady Rachael Russell, and a Lady Bountiful, in every parish, we should *hear* less of progression and regeneration, and *perceive* them more; for the worst of most professed philanthropists is, that they seldom manage to unite those two charming young people—theory and practice,

on account, I suppose, of the course of true love never running smooth; and, alas! the *soi-disant* religious world seem equally at fault, for while thanking their God that they are not like other men, Christ—Heaven's cynosure of charity—is left out of their Christianity; and if you do not *talk* religion as much as they do, and make of your own righteousness a first-class engine to send others to perdition, no matter how rigidly you may put God's commandments into *action*, they will flatly tell you, with more piety than politeness, that you are not a Christian.

It is true, that each age avenges its predecessor, because each age is a little wiser at the expense of that predecessor; but this species of inevitable apotheosis is of little use to the martyr, however it may redound to the glory of the nation: and I very much doubt whether the manes of poor Caus (scoffed and lashed into madness at Bicêtre for trying to benefit his fellow-creatures), feel much appeased by all Europe's now receiving their letters and parcels, and being themselves conveyed from pole to pole in an incredibly short space of time, or even at his great successor, Stephenson's having been offered a knighthood!!!!!!!!

Alas! poor Solomon Caus! thy manes, instead of being appeased, may even be insane enough to think this the more be(k)nighted age of the two, notwithstanding its great progress (of steam).

But to return to my own individual little packet of hereditary misery and injustice, all in weeping bitterly

over the poor wreck before me, my heart knelt in thanks, and my soul was lifted up in gratitude to God, that he had allowed one star to shine upon my desert, and still its rays, though now so distant guided, by reminding me that even on earth's most desolate spot, there was a heaven above it, and a God within that heaven to watch over the most weary and way-worn; and I felt that painful and perplexing, as my position might be: my duty was to act, and not to let grief gain over me the ignoble victory of stupefaction: so at least *you* always acted, so you spoke, so you looked, dear uncle, and I felt that look the more, that perhaps I might never see it again. Oh! Châteaubriand is right, "il y a une vertu dans les regards d'un grand homme," that is of a good man, for there is no other greatness, none at least that Heaven endorses.

My father complained of his head, of his chest, in short, of being ill altogether; I persuaded him to keep his bed. I thought if I could only one day get him to remain away from that horrid dinner-table, it would be at least a reprieve, which to the doomed is something. Like a child, it was evident that he was pleased with the novelty of having me with him; and as soon as the fumes of the last night's orgy began to dissipate sufficiently to enable him to collect his thoughts, he began asking me about Grace: he had chosen the subject well, for that was one on which I could be eloquent. He expressed his fears that her mind had been quite poisoned against him. "Was

mine?" asked I reproachfully: but as David was condemned out of his own mouth, so is it always better to defend people by their own words, and above all, deeds, if they are worth defending: and so I read all Grace had said about her arrival at Castle Sedley, and her deep anxiety about him.

At first, I saw he was much pleased; and when I came to that paragraph where she said, that if she now knew where he was, not all the aunts in the world should prevent her going to him, he was greatly affected, and one heavy tear rolled down each cheek, as it had done the day before when he pronounced my name; how grateful I felt when I saw them, for then I knew that all that was left unscathed in his poor heart now made no difference between his two children. By degrees, he became so much interested about Grace, that I thought it would be a glorious opportunity to pave the way to Monsieur de Maillepré's intended appeal to him; and as I was to have so distinguished a diplomat for my brother-in-law, I was determined to prove myself worthy of the alliance by the tact and *savoir faire* with which I conducted this complicated and nice matter. So I began by telling him that Grace was oppressed with a secret which she would not disclose to my aunts, but wanted to open her heart to him, as she could not be happy until she had done so. For less than an instant, a flush of pleasure actually suffused his pale cheek, to think that after all he should be first in his child's estimation—this was

the golden moment to strike the decisive blow; I told him about Monsieur de Maillepré's disinterested love for Grace, and read him that part of her letter: "To be sure," cried he, almost with enthusiasm, "she shall have my consent, and my blessing too, poor child!—poor children!" then groaned he, covering his face with his hands, "that it should *be all* I have left to give you."

"All! dear papa," cried I, throwing my arms round his neck, "and what more would you have? for if you give us that, depend upon it, God will give us the rest. Thank you, my own dear, good, kind father, then I may write to Grace to-day, and tell her?"

"Ay, my dear child," said my poor father, taking my face between his trembling hands, and looking with a painful sort of vacant intensity into my eyes; "tell her what you like, but don't tell her that I can never love her as I love you."

"No, I certainly shall not tell her that, because it will cease to be true the moment you know her."

"No, you are like your poor mother, Mirry, very like;" and he pressed his hands upon his eyes, as his head sank upon his pillow; but it would have been cruel, with the feeble expiring light his memory now shed, to let him go groping back into the irrecoverable past; so I said to rouse him,

"And I may write to dear Uncle Paulett too, may I not? Oh! you would so love Uncle Paulett, he *is* such a darling! so thorougly good."

"Yes, I believe he is a good man," sighed my father; "indeed, he must be good, for he has made a good girl of you."

"Oh! don't praise me too soon," rejoined I, trying to laugh through my tears, "till you see how I wear; but if there is any good in me, which I fear is very doubtful, depend upon it I owe it to Uncle Paulett; so recollect, dear *padre*, when I do wrong it's me, Mirry; but when I do right, 'c'est Marc Aurèle (*alias* George Paulett) qui parle!'"

"Et moi qui écoute, et qui admire," said my father, pressing my hand.

"Ah! Monsieur parle bien français?"

"No, Mirry, I do nothing well now."

"Well," said I, pouting, and shrugging my shoulders, as I used to do when a child, "if me's not well loved, me'll do back to school."

My father gave a slight shudder, and said, "his feet were very cold."

"I have not many accomplishments," said I, kneeling down by the bed-side to rub them, "but I flatter myself that I might be shampooer to the Shah of Persia."

My self-praises were borne out by my poor father's, who at the end of half an hour said, he had not felt so near heaven for long time. And then I offered to read to him.

"I fear, my child, you would not like to read the only books I now read, with the exception of a chapter

in the Bible on Sundays, which is 'The Sporting Magazine.'"

"I like to read anything you like," said I, as I took up that invaluable work off a table, where it lay with the last edition of "Joe Miller, with additions," "The Annual Register," and a curious old original edition of "Rabelais," with plates, that had belonged to Dean Swift, given to him by Lord Bolingbroke, with the autograph of the latter in the fly-leaf, announcing that fact. I read till about three o'clock, when Tom Lutron came blustering into the room in his charming frogged coat, saying, as he held out his tremendous hand to me:

"Ah! then, my dear Godfrey, don't you mane to get up to-day?"

"No," said I, in haste to answer for him, "he is not well, and I am going to dine with him."

"You are! well then, upon me word, Mr. and Miss Miriam Sedley, I think you trate your poor relations very shabbily; but divil a better luck those same poor relations have all the world over. I, that thought I was to be the envy of all Bond Street, and the Park, driving, by no manes, the ugliest gerril in London, though she is me cousin, and bearing, I've no doubt, a strong family likeness to me, though, perhaps, it's not exactly visible to the naked eye. Well, at all events, you must come into the next room, and have a look at Spanker and Blucher, for though I am a poor divil, I flatter meself there are not two prettier bits of blood in all London than my two bays."

"Bays! I should have thought they had been duns!"

"Oh! now, Godfrey, listen to the wickedness of the little divil, reminding me of me misfortunes. The fact is, me dear, me duns—and be d—d to them—have been driving me all me life, and I've felt the cruelty of the thing so much, that I'm too good a Christian not to do as I'd be done by; so that's the raison that I don't drive them."

To get rid of him the sooner I went into the sitting-room to look at his horses, which were truly, as he had said, a remarkably handsome pair of bays, but in a very shabby *mauvais-ton* curricle, with two equally shabby, dingy-looking grooms behind, who savoured far more of Tara's Halls than Tattersall's. I was curious to know, for my further guidance, how this extraordinary *ménage* was carried on; so after I had admired his horses, I put down the following plummet:

"Are these your lodgings, or papa's?"

"His, or mine, my dear, whichever you like; what's mine is his, and what's his is mine: mind you recollect that," said he, winking furiously; "but the fact is," added he, with a sigh, and assuming a look almost of feeling, "my governor—the old lord as they call him at Clanfuddle—behaved d—d ill to poor Godfrey, and not much better to me, for he chated him out of a very fine property, and me out of my birthright, by letting Lutron be born three years before me; and so, as we

are both beggars, we ought to help one another; besides, poor Godfrey always gave me the run of his cellar, as long as there was a bottle of claret in it, and, by Dad! he shall share Tom Lutron's purse, as long as there is a shilling in it, or a dun after it. I put in that latter clause, my dear, to make the lase of our friendship the longer, for the other would be but a mighty short tenure;" and he turned to the window, whistling "The Groves of Blarney," and knocking the silver top of the heavy hunting whip, by way of accompaniment, against his teeth.

Somehow or other, I could not help disliking the man less, for I began to look upon him as another wreck; for wherever there is a heart, there might have been a temple built upon it worthy of the Deity. Alas! alas! that for the few such that are raised upon the glorious site he gives to all, there should be so much rubbish only.

"But surely," said I, "you must find such horses as those very expensive?"

"Sacrets in every trade, my dear," said he, putting his forefinger to the side of his nose; "and Tom Lutron knows a thing or two: there's a certain house in St. James's Street, where I occasionally do a little business with a certain Mr. Dingly Vavasour, who plays high, but not deep; and as they say that Fortune favours fools—and small blame to her—for what could they do for themselves—I lave you to guess how matters stand; for I'd kick meself down stairs, if

I could be blackguard enough to boast of any lady's favours, especially one who has always bane so backward in giving any of our family encouragement, as that said Madame Fortune, bad luck to her! which is only wishing her a daughter, you know," added he, winking, as he kissed his hand, and left the room: "for it don't do to abuse those vindictive sort of divils, aven behind their back."

I stood a moment at the window, till he had driven off, and then returned to my post, thinking how many paths of pleasure had already opened to me in life; the philosophy of 'The Pig and Whistle,' the miracles of Fox Court, and the dissipation of driving about in such an equipage! with such a man as Tom Lutron! With these thoughts I rang for Nelly, and begged that my father and I might have our dinner on a tray at five, and then I returned to my post, where I managed so well, between teaching him *écarté*, which he did not know, and singing to him an infinite number of Béranger's songs, with which he was delighted, never having heard them before, and the Irish melodies which delighted him, because he had heard them, that eleven o'clock came without his having taken anything, but a little wine and water at dinner. But what pleased him most was, my singing that beautiful "Adelaida," of Beethoven's, without an accompaniment, which, by the bye, is rather difficult; but as he liked my voice I was determined the next day to get a pianoforte, and see if I could not get up a conspiracy against those

horrid sittings after dinner. On this night I sat with him till half-past twelve, and then I said:

"Dear Papa, do let me read prayers to you; I have all my life prayed for you, but oh! it would be such happiness at last to be able to pray *with* you."

"*Let* you, darling! what an idea! God knows no one needs prayers so much; do always pray for, and to, and with me, Mirry, as long as I am here, and when I am gone; though I forgot you on earth, I'll not do so in Heaven—if I ever get there!"

"You will get there, dear Father; for none pray to God in vain." I then knelt down and prayed beside him, oh! how fervently; and when I rose up and opened the Bible at random, as is my wont, what should I open upon but the twenty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which is on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine." For open the word of God where one will, it is astonishing how "the handwriting appears on the wall." I did not, of course, read out this chapter, but turned to that beautiful one, the thirty-fifth, which commences with—"The wilderness, and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

"'The wilderness and the solitary place' *is* made glad, darling," said my poor Father, kissing me when I had closed the book; "and though my poor desert of a heart does rejoice, thanks be to God, who has

sent me my own little rose here, yet it never can blossom again, because there are too many thorns."

"And don't you think, dear Father, that He who sends roses, can also take away thorns ?" But he made no answer but a sigh, and I remained silent, for I never was a good hand at mocking misery of any sort with those trite and common-place exhortations to patience and resignation, which are so plentifully lavished upon those who suffer, by those who either do not, or have not suffered, as they naturally irritate instead of soothe : to enjoin resignation to the will of God, is another thing, and an imperative duty beside; but never try to persuade any poor wretch, that the burden they are groaning under, is not, in reality, so heavy as it is in their imagination ; as to do so, is both cruel and false, for God would not afflict us if he did not mean that we should feel it. And even that most blessed of all anodynes—hope ! requires to be administered with great skill and discrimination, to those whose wretchedness is chronic, and whose hearts have long been debarred from it ; for being the natural food of the heart, the mind's digestion, like that of the body, becomes too weak after prolonged abstinence, to bear much of even that sustaining and salutary fallacy.

I sat by my poor father's bedside, till St. George's church struck two ; he having been, thank heaven ! for the last hour in a profound and quiet sleep, in which I left him and returned to my own room, where

I wrote to Grace, the glad and also the sad tidings I had to impart. To my uncle I wrote too, but having to do so through Clarence Paulett, I could not open my whole heart as I longed to do, to that dearest, kindest, best, and best loved being on earth.

CHAPTER VI.

For the next month I had to undergo what I can only define by the antithetical expression of a "stagnant struggle;" and of all struggles it is the hardest, for it is the catalepsy of the mind, acutely sensitive, and tumultuously busy in feeling, but hopeless, powerless, and incapable of all corporeal action; to be able to contend, is nearly to conquer; at all events it is to have an equal chance of victory; but to see the enemy armed *cap à pie*, with every weapon of destruction, while one has none of defence, beyond a fragile paper-shield with "Resignation" written on it; is to be like a wild beast in a den, and all lion, though one may be, the parasol-stick poking of the most inane *British female* that ever existed, suffices to worry one to death at these unequal odds, as I shall explain presently, first stating that I had so far succeeded in my arduous

enterprize, that by dint of music, reading, cards, backgammon, and all sorts of other "poor inventions," especially taking him long drives into the country, and getting him to walk a little when the weather would allow it. I so far weaned my poor father from his terrible and besetting sin, watching him by his bed-side like a child every night, till I had prayed, sang, or shampoo'd him to sleep, so that upon an average, he did not break from my bonds more than once in a week, and then the next day, he would be so contrite, humiliated, and submissive to me, that it was worse than all the rest, except the morning upon which my cousin (since such he was), informed me that he was quite ready to make me Mrs. Tom Lutron!

I thanked him for his obliging announcement (for offer I could not call it, as that is supposed to leave the offeree an option); but I told him that I was by no means nearly ready, as I should require such an immense and unprecedentedly magnificent *trousseau* to induce me to enter the ring (where women generally get the worst of it) that it would take at least fifty years to prepare it; and that then either he or I, or both, I was afraid would be too old. Out of evil, however, comes good, for, from that day, he never dined at home; so that I soon reformed not only the hours, but the dinners (and consequently the bills), having no more aldermanic banquets from "The Thatched House," as Nelly was a very good plain-cook; but in consideration of this "economy, and

retrenchment," I banished the excrescence, potatoe-skin plates, and introduced all sorts of innovations, and luxuries, in the form of water-glasses and quotidian clean napkins, and table-cloths *à discrétion.*

At the end of three weeks, my poor father was able to dine in the dining-room; and as the fumes of punch and cigars began to diminish from the sitting-room, our comfort, at least resignation to our dingy domicile, augmented. It was about a week after the establishment of this new order of things, that I was sitting one morning up in my own room, putting (don't be shocked, gentle, or even simple, reader, if there is such a thing now-a-days) putting new collars to my father's shirts; for you will understand, with all my advocacy of vulgar, that is, useful acquirements, and all my honest pride in possessing them, though I was neither born a cook, nor a house-maid, *je ne lave, ni ne raccommode mon linge au salon;* for Napoleon said one ought not do so, in which I quite agree with him. Well, for this reason, I was in my own room, when Nelly appeared, and informed me, that the "good ooman of the house," as her sacrilegious Irish tongue called her, "Misthress Dobbs, had called, and had a note from a lady, that she wished to give me."

"Cannot she give it to you, Nelly?"

"No, Mish; Dowling says she knows you herself, and wishes to see you."

"How tiresome! what is she like?"

"Dade, Miss, I don't know; Morrish let her in, and

she's in de dining room, though I didn't see her; but Morrish says, she's all feaders and colours, like a West Injee parrot."

"Well, I suppose I must see her," said I, not very graciously, for having had a Lourie described, I did not expect to see a houri, which was lucky; "let her be shown up to the drawing-room." I laid down my work, and descended to the drawing-room, where I was more surprised than pleased, at seeing a skinny, red-faced, and vulgarly over-dressed woman enter, who, after having made the *obligato* freezing-machine curtsey at the door, without, of course, a shadow of a smile upon her face,* stepped up to me in the most free (if not welcome) manner, saying:

"It's no use; I must ave a kiss."

"I think you must mistake me for some one else," said I, now falling myself into the orthodox two degrees below zero manner.

* Foreigners of every country, when they bow to, or salute you in whatever sphere of life they may be, smile graciously,or rather their whole countenance

> "Like any fair lake that the breeze is upon,
> Breaks into dimples and laughs in the sun!"

While the middle classes of English (the *haute volée* being well-mannered, if not well-bred, in all countries), are like the same lake that the north wind is upon, which stagnates to ice despite the sun. I have been told they mean this grim solemnity as a mark of respect; if so, I can only exclaim, as Charles Surface did, touching sentiment, which, it may be remembered, he consigned to the fate of an Amster—dam canal.

"I am so glad to see you! What a fine girl you are grown, to be sure! And ow is Sir George, and Mrs. Marley, and Miss Paulett?—though now I needn't mind saying it, but I never could bear them. And Grace—clever girl, isn't she? I always said she'd great abilities, but still, you were the one for my money,—and so the aides-de-camp said,—gentlemanly, and-some fellows, weren't they? So fond of the red-coats, I am!—I always was. Never thought I should ave married as I ave done. Ah, well! there's a fate in marriage, ain't there? And I must say, Dobbs don't begrudge me hanythink—would give me gold to heat hif I could heat it. Fact its—between you and I—he's proud of me, for I certainly did marry beneath me in marrying him. But lor! one can but be appy, can one?"

Mrs. Dobbs having at length stopped to take breath, I ventured to inquire where I had had the pleasure of seeing her last, that is, in what cabinet of gems, or curiosities, or bottle, glass, jug, basin, or other vase, before she had been thrown away upon Dobbs, whom she had so rapidly, but yet typographically, given me to understand was a perfect matrimonial dusthole, or any other similar emporium for unappreciated sundries.

"Lor! is it possible you don't recollect me? But no, to be sure, ow could you? You was quite a little thing then. Why, I am Miss—or, rayther, I should say I was—Miss Squiggins, that your Aunt Marley

beaved so shameful bad to: but I told the Countess of Catch-your-man, and many others of hequally igh rank—for, thank eaven! I ave many friends among the haristocracy—indeed, I may say all my connexion lies in that line—yes, I told them all about it. 'Dear me!' said the Countess, 'how hever could you stay, Miss Squiggins?' 'Why, your Ladyship his aware,' said I, one as one's feelings; it was not all petticoats in the ouse—Sir George was quite the gentleman, so were the aides-de-camps; and I was also so much attached to my pupils.' But, dear me! I'm quite forgetting all I came about. You must know, it was by the merest haccident, I knew you were ere, for the ouse is taken in the name of the Honourable Tom Lutron; but the hother morning, his butler came hasking for table-linen, and hall sorts of glasses and things, that had never been hasked for before, and he said it was because Miss Sedley would ave them. 'Miss Sedley!' said I. 'What Miss Sedley? Hany relation to Sir George Paulett?' 'His niece,' said he. So then I knew it was either you or Miss Grace; and I was so glad that I could not elp telling a lady who hoccupys another ouse of hours in Hupper Seymour Street—for Mr. Dobbs's property is in ouses," (I remarked that when it came to property the *fumier* rose in the scale, and was no longer plain Dobbs, the *mésalliance*, but Mr. Dobbs), "not that," continued his superior half, "we are obliged to let them, honly, as I said to Dobbs, 'Harthur,

it will be society-like* for me, and it is a pity to let them stand hempty,'—between you and I, my dear (though I did not tell Dobbs so), I thought by letting our ouses I should keep up my connexion with the haristocracy, for, as I before said, I never thought I

* I hope it will not be thought that I am plagiarizing from those charming volumes of inane rubbish, which a leading publisher pours out so remorselessly upon that much enduring animal, the British public; but when one has to describe vulgar people, one must, perforce, make use of the elegant language of the heroes and heroines of the aforesaid ultra-vulgar and ultra-trashy novels. Lever is not an Englishman, so I may fairly assert, without fear of contradition, that the author of "Vanity Fair" and "Pendennis," is the only English novelist deserving that name. There is no vulgar caricaturing in lieu of genuine humour—all in them is perfectly true to nature, and to life as it is, relieved by a tone of good society. He is, in short, the Charles Mathews of novelists—no small praise, since the Lyceum is the only theatre we have, where one sees perfect acting—because perfect nature, but gentleman-like nature. Heaven deliver us, and that soon, from the rantings, clippings, howlings, and hissings of the men, and the heavings, pantings, whinings, stagey squeaks, and vulgar flouncings of the "females" at all the other theatres, where even Shakspere's doublet is crammed with chaff into a scarecrow. It is much to be regretted, for his own sake, that Mr. Thackerey should be splashed by the literary mud of his present *entourage;* but as he appears to have the feelings of a gentleman, and neither blows a blacksmith's bellows of self-praise, charged with hyperborean German plagiarisms, or writes vulgar caricature of waiters, eating up schoolboys' dinners at inns, or all sorts of fine sentiments against cruelty and injustice, the better to toady and herd with all that is most loathsome in moral depravity. It is to be hoped he will soon emancipate himself from a certain disgraceful clique.

should marry as I ave done. Oh, no! very different from that! but I do say, and shall always think, that propinquity does for young women as a shower of rain does for a new bonnet." And while Mrs. Dobbs perorated this profound truth with a sigh, I, who found that, if *l'appétit vient en mangeant* curiosity certainly grows in listening, ventured to ask her, where she had met with Mr. Dobbs.

"Oh, lor! it was to be, I suppose; for he was my brother's partner,—"Squiggins and Dobbs," the great atters (hatters), corner of Vigo Lane."

This was a great relief to my mind, for, notwithstanding the sensitive exaltation of Mrs. Dobbs's ideas concerning the rank of the man who might have worthily aspired to the honour of inducing her to lay aside the aristocratic name of Squiggins, yet I, as an impartial and disinterested umpire, did not fail to perceive that if Dobbs was worthy of being partner to a he-Squiggins, *cæteris paribus* he could not be quite unworthy of being partner, even for life, to a she-Squiggins. Besides, *was he not a hatter still!* and consequently at the very top of his pro-fession, as his wife would have called his trade? Had he been a hosier or a shoe-maker, then, indeed, she might have put her foot in it, and thought she had descended too low.

"Well," said I, having solved this problem to my own satisfaction; "and the lady in your other house that you were going to tell me about?"

"Oh! ah! she is a Mrs. Vavasour, a very *genteel* woman; has only been in our ouse a week, aving come up from Tonbridge Wells, where she's been quite a hinvalid; but she's now hexpecting her son from abroad—such a andsome fellow, to be sure, if he's like his picture! and she does seem in such a hagitation, poor thing, about aving hevery thing nice for him, though she's not sure whether he'll stay with 'er, or go to an hotel, when he comes. But lor! one would think it was the Prince Regent a-coming, instead of her own flesh and blood. Well, when I told her who I'd got in this 'ouse, she seemed quite hagitated again, and said she knew your huncle very well, who had written her a deal* about you, and she 'ad 'oped you would 'ave come to her at Tunbridge, but as you had not, nor yet written to her, and she was afraid to go out to-day on account of the fog, she would write to you; and here's the note; and I told her I'd take back the hanswer."

I took the note, and read it eagerly: it was worded in the kindest and most amiable manner, and pressed me to go and see her—if I could, to come and spend the day with her; but that would have been too much happiness. I could not leave my poor father, for fear he should again fall into the hands of the Philistines.

* Reader, pray believe that this is another plagiarism, and none of mine. Plain English is enough for me. I have no ambition to get to Bœotia, *or beyond the marshes.*

But I determined, when he went out to drive at three, to go to her, for I knew he would wait in the carriage; and to this effect I now wrote Mrs. Vavasour back word; and having sealed my note, I confided it to Mrs. Dobbs, after I had rung for some wine and water and sandwiches for that lady, who when I asked her whether she would take sherry in water, or claret in water, said she preferred claret, cold as the day was, because it reminded her of the haristocracy! Oh, that aristocracy! what struggles, sextile imitations and sufferings it has entailed upon the middle classes of this country; who nearly all, from attempting to be above what they are, are infinitely below what they ought to be.

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. Dobbs, looking at her watch, "it wants a quarter to two! I must make haste back, or Dobbs will be so angry! for he says, a young married *female* ought not to be out late alone."

I could not help thinking, that it did not much matter how young the marriage was, when the female was not equally so, and, moreover, as unmistakeably ugly as Mrs. Dobbs; but I have remarked, that among a certain class of *British females,* next to the *very different station they ought to be in.* Their *idée fixe* seems to be the fatal passions they have inspired, are inspiring, and will inspire; which, if they have the slightest foundation for this notion, only proves what sensible beings British males must be, not to be led

away by beauty (that fragile ephemera, but select ugliness !) as being the more solid and lasting; for even Time, old sinner thoug he be, like the rest of his sex, always respects ugly women, and keeps his distance, only charitably bettering their condition as they grow old, by allowing them to make *him* responsible for their ill looks.

"Oh ! Mrs. Dobbs," said I, "before you go, I have something to ask you for."

"Any think, I'm sure Miss Sedley, I shall be most appy, for we are not like needy people, and always like to oblige the ladies and gentlemen who are staying with us" (mark the delicacy of the wording; not a syllable about lodgings, or letting houses !); "and perhaps there may be many things wanting, for we are not at all used to this sort of thing. As I said before, it was only because we had so many 'ouses, I thought it would be better to accommodate our friends; it's not like people who have been used to let lodgings, you see, Miss Sedley: but we are perfect babies about hevery think; but, as I said to Mrs. Vavasour, I oped she felt it a consolation under her sorrows, aving been unfortunate enough to meet with us, for so many of my friends wanted to come and live with us; but as I told Mrs. Vavasour, I should not think of going back of my bargain with her, or raising the rent, if she stayed."

"Why, I suppose she has a written agreement," said

I, not a little disgusted at the eternal praises this class of English people bestow upon themselves, and the obligation they make it to transfer the money from your pocket to theirs; and yet, with all their talents for screwing and grasping, they are terrible fools for their pains, because they so sicken one of acting liberally towards them.

"Oh! of course," replied she in answer to my query. "But what I want you to give me, Mrs. Dobbs, is a sofa, or a *chaise-longue* for Papa's room."

"Oh! I really could not, or—that is, I could; but it would be a guinea a month. Mr. Dobbs as ad so many losses this year we really cannot afford it."

Now I might have had great compassion for Mr. Dobbs's pecuniary losses which prevented his giving anything to make his house habitable, had not his wife insisted all along upon their being so very well off as not to require to let their house at all, but merely doing it from an overflow of philanthropic hospitality "to accommodate their friends;" but not being quite such a fool as perhaps I may appear, I merely said:

"Thank you, Mrs. Dobbs, at that rate I prefer hiring a new one, which I enquired the other day about at Gillows, and heard it would be ten shillings a month."

This was to be a day of unexpected arrivals, for scarcely had Mrs. Dobbs taken her departure, before a carriage drove up to the door, and in a few minutes

Maurice brought in a letter and a card, saying, that the gentleman had asked for my father and for me, and waited to know if we could receive him. The letter was from Grace, and on the card was—

"LE COMTE EUGENE DE MAILLEPRÉ,

"SECRETAIRE DE LA LEGATION,

"DE FRANCE."

My heart beat violently—partly with emotion and partly with shame; thank heaven! the smell of cigars and their accompaniments had been got out of the room, and superseded by a few plants, flowers, and books which always unvulgarize a room to a certain extent. Ah! had it been only the room—but it was my poor father; oh, terrible! most terrible of all feelings—most painful and difficult of all positions, when in any relationship of life, the order of nature is reversed; and that which should be our pride and support is our burden and our shame. Oh! but he loved Grace, and surely the great shadow of that deep and delicate love which she had so often described to me would fall in pity on *her* father.

"Beg of this gentleman to walk up," I said at length in a very faint voice—and it was a reprieve to think that my first interview with my future brother-in-law, considering all the painful circumstances under which it took place, would at least be alone; besides,

Grace had more than once mentioned his perfect manners, and with thorough-bred people, even the most *gauche,* cannot long be embarrassed. Soon the door again opened, and a very handsome high-bred looking man entered.

"Ah!" said he, advancing with a mixture of grace, cordiality, and respect that was irresistible, as he carried my proffered hand to his lips. "Mademoiselle Miriam Sedley, *il n'y a pas à s'y méprendre!* and I have so much to thank her for," added he (in such good English as to be a perfect miracle in a French mouth at that time), "that I scarcely know where to begin; but this I know, my gratitude will never end."

"*Excusez, Monsieur,*" said I, smiling, as we sat down; "but you acknowledge more than your share of the debt, for any exertions I may have made to propitiate my father, was chiefly on my sister's account."

"Now, Mademoiselle, you have made me doubly happy, therefore am I doubly grateful, and you go on multiplying my obligations, for you have set my mind at ease as to the only fault I feared your sister possessed."

"Fault! what fault? Every one has faults, they say; but really, setting all partiality aside, I should be puzzled to say what was Grace's fault."

"So should I now," said Monsieur de Maillepré; "but till to-day, as I before said, I had feared that she was guilty of one, and a very unpardonable one, too."

"You quite raise my curiosity," rejoined I; "but in my exculpation of Grace from any flagrant defects, pray don't suppose that I am calumniating her into that most odious of all things, "a faultless monster!" But do tell me, what the fault was that you thought she was guilty of?"

"Exaggeration in her manner of describing her sister; but I see I was mistaken, and am only too happy to have so fair an occasion of recanting my heresy and scepticism, and from my heart I do so," said he, pressing his hands to it, and bowing over them.

"Ah!" said I, laughing, "Monsieur n'est pas diplomat pour rien; je crains qu'il est tant-soit-peu persifleur!"

"En politique, peut-être? For truth has nothing to do with politics; but at all events," added he, walking over to a looking-glass, and touching it with his cane, "I never assert anything without being able to prove it; and here is one whose testimony you must believe, as it tells nothing but truths on the face of it!"

My face was now very red, not from Monsieur de Maillepré's compliments — for, exaggerated as they were, they were delicately administered—but I thought the time was come, when I must offer to go for my father.

"If you will excuse me a moment," said I, with some hesitation, "I will go and let papa know you are here; I am sure he will be delighted to see you; but

—but—that is, I mean—I suppose Grace has told you how terribly shattered his health is, and—"

"Yes, yes," said he, taking both my hands, and pressing them kindly in his, "she has told me all about it; and don't let him disturb himself on my account, pray; for unfortunately," added he with a sigh, "I had an uncle who fell a martyr to that same horrible custom of the last age, which is happily going out in this; and you know we must be very careful of our poor father in his present state."

I felt the noble delicate kindness and tact of what he said, and his charming manner of saying it, so intensely, that I was no longer mistress of myself, and burst into tears, for it not only reminded me of my dear uncle's generous way of nullifying the obligation of all he conferred, by throwing himself into partnership in the benefits that accrued from it, but it was so different from the coarse probing and eternal misconstruction my poor feelings had been subjected to for the last three years, that the reaction was too much for me.

"How kind, how generous you are," said I, as soon as I could speak; "oh! thank you, a thousand times."

"Mais non," rejoined he gaily, "vous savez que marchand d'oignons s'y connait en ciboules! and my poor uncle* has made me *au fait* to our present posi-

* I afterwards discovered that M. de Maillepré had had, such an uncle, but had never seen him.

tion. While you are gone, I'll take a book; so you see, *chère petite belle sœur*, I lose no time in installing myself in my new home."

"Oh! don't call this place home," said I.

"But, yes—every place is home, where one's heart is; and I shall always love this little room, from the kind manner you received me in it. Indeed, I am not sure," continued he, laughing, "that I shall not come and pass our *lune de miel* here. How do you call that in English?"

"Honeymoon."

"Ah! honeymoon—la même chose."

"Pas toujours, à ce qu'on dit," said I.

"Now, don't think me a presuming, impertinent fellow," said Monsieur de Maillepré, "but if you will allow me to call you Miriam, and you will, *tout bonnement*, call me Eugène, I think I shall appear less formidable to poor papa, if he will see me."

"With pleasure, my dear, good Eugène," said I, again holding out my hand to him.

"Well, now, my dear Miriam, you shall go and tell our father that his son wishes to have the honour of seeing him. What have we here? 'Childe Harold.' Ah! je suis fou! de Lord Byron—that is, as far as I understand his sublime poetry; at all events, I think I understand him better than *ses bêtes de compatriotes*. We have a poet, of whom France will one day have cause to be as proud as England will be of Byron—

our young Lamartine; and that fine line of his always reminds me of, and explains to me Lord Byron:

"L'homme est un dieu tombé, qui se souvient des cieux."

"Et ce souvenir lui ramenera là," said I, as I left the room.

It detained me some little time to prepare my father for Monsieur de Maillepré's arrival, for I did not like to announce it to him abruptly, for fear of flurrying him; and then there was a still further delay, to tell him what a charming person the former was, so as, if possible, to make him feel at his ease beforehand; but this was the most difficult task of the two, for the vague, in evil, is always more terrible than the positive; and when the body is totally enfeebled and prostrated, our own feelings are with difficulty tangible or palpable to our intelligence, through the moral fog that exhales from this sort of physical stagnation.

Like an infant, my poor father submitted to every change I chose to make in his toilet; and after I had arranged his hair, the first *émeute* I got up was with the horribly unbecoming bale of white muslin he used to wear round his neck, in guise of cravat; and the blue coat, with gilt, embossed buttons, purporting to be those of the Clanfuddle Hunt, and bearing a fox's head, surmounted by a crown; which, coming from so seditious a country as Ireland, had a most satirical

and treasonable appearance ; and, although the cravat was tied, and the coat was cut on the exact model of those of "the first gentleman of the age," (so called, no doubt, from his manly and honourable behaviour to his wife), I had the one exchanged for a black silk handkerchief, and the other for a plain frock-coat, and though the wearer still appeared a wreck, it was at least the wreck of a gentleman.

"Ah ! well—but isn't it strange that I should give what I haven't got, what I never had?" said my father, vacantly, and pausing as we were half-way to the door.

"Yes, dear Papa—you have got Grace's duty and affection for yourself, and her happiness in your keeping too ; and it is only the latter we want you to entrust to Monsieur de Maillepré."

"No, no—I'm afraid it's not right," said he, pulling his under-lip, as his eyes wandered with painful vacuity over the bare and smoke-dried branches of a pear-tree, that rose like a trophy of desolation from out the centre of the gravel pocket-handkerchief, called the garden, in front of the bed-room windows ; "no—it can't be—for even Tom says you should never agree to anything, without seeing it. That's the way my uncle cheated me, cheated you and Grace, Mirry, otherwise you would have been heiresses. Ha ! ha ! they laugh at Irish heiresses here."

"Yes, dear father, because that in order to be an

Irish heiress, it is necessary that your property should belong to some one else; and the English are the most matter-of-fact people under the sun—all descendants of St. Thomas, who never believe what they don't see, or even what they do see as plain as noon-day, if the seeing it would in the remotest degree compromise their interests, real or imaginary; but in giving Grace to Monsieur de Maillepré, you will make her much happier, and me too, than if Lord Lutron had allowed us to remain heiresses, even in the *bonâ-fide* English sense of the term."

"Shall I?" said my father, quickening his pace towards the door; "then let me do it directly while I think of it."

As soon as we opened the door leading into the passage, previous to going into the drawing-room, I perceived that my poor father was seized with another panic; but as I recollected how completely Monsieur de Maillepré had put me at my ease, I had implicit faith in his good feeling, and *savoir vivre* for achieving what I, singly, never could have done, and so without further delay opened the door; in a moment, Monsieur de Maillepré came forward; nothing could exceed the tenderness, yet deference, of his manner, as he held out his hand to my father, and then said:

"I hope, my dear Sir, Miriam has expressed to you a little of the gratitude I so deeply feel for the kind manner in which you have not only received, but

granted my request; you have, indeed, every reason to be proud of your charming daughters; and though I cannot flatter myself that I am worthy of such an honour, yet I hope, in allowing me to become your son, you will never have cause to repent of your kindness."

"No, no, it's not *that* I shall repent of," said my father, returning the pressure of Monsieur de Maillepré's hand, as we all three sat down, and then Eugène, at once changing the subject which he perceived pained and embarassed my father, began in the most natural manner in the world talking about dogs, horses, hunting, and five-barred gates, when as if touched by a wand, my father seemed to re-kindle into consecutive intelligence; and when Monsieur de Maillepré exclaimed with enthusiasm:

"Ah! quel magnifique pays, pour la chasse à courre."

"N'est ce pas?" cried my father, placing his hand familiarly on his future son-in-law's shoulder; but when in discussing Newmarket, the Derby, the St. Leger and the Oaks, the latter gave the palm to the Curragh of Kildare, my father had arrived at calling him "my dear boy," I could not but admire how naturally, and with what exquisite good breeding all this had been brought about; there was no offensive displays of marked attention to the impotant old man, no reminding him of its loss by tender inquiries about his health; in short, no effort or attempts of any kind,

but that deep under current of kindness and tact, which always produces a smooth, flowing, and agreeable surface, over which all things, from the smallest to the greatest, glide pleasantly. We were still talking, turf and training (I say we, because, thanks to my recent course of reading in the "Sporting Magazine," I was as well crammed as a newly-fledged patriot with a maiden speech, and, therefore, was duly qualified to take part in this edifying conversation; and I found it necessary to do so, because charmed as my poor father evidently was with his future *genre*, yet the force of habit made him cling to me as his bottle-holder); and I had just slid in a most learned quotation from Tom Chiffney, touching the merits and demerits of the favourite, when there came one of those atrocious old-fashioned, but now, thank heaven! exploded, thundering footmen's knocks, that almost make one rebound with their galvanic force up to the ceiling. I ran to the head of the stairs to say "not at home," and then through the window I perceived the same identical "glass coach" which had conveyed Mr. Thesmothete Pinchbeck on a former occasion to "Concave House," and his tawny, saturnine, leathern visage, relieved by the florid capsicum face, and above all, nose of Lady Laura O'Shindy! Oh, how I rejoiced upon having put Maurice on the preventive service; but as I before remarked, one should never rejoice at anything in this world, except the prospect of getting out of it, for presently after Mr. Pinch-

beck's *recitativo* of "Do you see me now?" I heard Lady Laura's falsetto-squeak, while she beat time with that *bâton* of a finger of hers. "Oh, but you must take my card up to Miss Sedley, for I'm just returned from Pawis (Anglice, Paris), and I'm sure she'll see me!" for one of the most aggravated and hopeless symptoms of Lady Laura's vulgar freedom was, that she always laboured under the delusion that she was welcome everywhere; but then, to be sure, it must be pleaded in extenuation, that if she had waited till she was, she would never have gone any where; or had she also stayed till her society was sought, she must have led a life of total seclusion. Maurice soon arrived with her subpœna, for it was certainly nothing less. "Dear! how very annoying," said I, quite out of humour, "that one's house, at least, one's dingy lodging, can not be called one's own, but must be forcibly entered in the name of the autocrat of English society, ennui!"

"Who is it, my dear?" asked my father.

"Lady Laura O'Shindy, she said at——that she knew you intimately at Clanfuddle, for she is always raking up acquaintances from the ashes of time, and if she cannot manage it in any other way, gives one the grilled bones of one's grandfathers and grandmothers; but is it true, that you used to walk in the fields with her papa, and once saved her life from a mad bull?"

"Oh, ah! I do remember once seeing her home from Castle Sedley across the fields to Clanfuddle, but, my

dear, the bull was not mad at all, but as quiet and well-behaved a bull as could possibly be, till he saw Lady Laura's nose, and I suppose mistook it for a red hot poker, which of course set him bellowing and furiously plunging all over the field."

Here Monsieur de Maillepré took her card out of my hand, and having read it, he pressed his eyelids tightly with his fingers, and tossing back his head, exclaimed with a sort of muscular convulsion :

" Ah, cette cauchemar de femme ! elle est laide comme une grimace !"

" What do you know her too ?" laughed I.

" Yes, for my sins, I met her one morning in David's *atelier*, but was amply compensated by the *mauvaise plaisanterie*, he was playing off upon her. She is, as I suppose I need not tell you, horribly vain, and as from her ridiculous dress and appearance, everybody stares at her, she actually fancies herself a beauty. Hearing that David was about to paint an historical picture of the Mother of the Grachii, for the next year's exposition, Lady Laura never ceased teazing her unhappy husband to get David to let her sit, or rather stand, for the model of Cornelia, saying, that she was the very thing for a Roman matron, or mahtron, as she calls it, and actually wanting modestly to substitute her *own books !* for the two boys to illustrate the speech of ' These are my Jewels,' till he had seen her, David accepted the offer with much gratitude, but no sooner had he done so, than he told her there was one condition he always imposed upon his models, which was,

that they never were to see the picture till it appeared at the Louvre. She consented, *et que fait ce diable de David!* but paint a startling picture of the Witch of Endor raising the shade of Samuel before Saul, the witch being a flagrant likeness of Lady Laura, even to that skinny finger of hers."

"Charming!" laughed I, "David is a second Daniel, have you any objection to her coming up, dear Papa?"

"Very great, my dear; but I suppose she must come up, as she *will* do so."

Upon this, I went to the door, and told Maurice, who was still waiting outside to shew her up; and a few minutes after, Lady Laura, all feathers and faintings, that is, little die away *minauderies*, sailed into the room, with her undulating Venus rising from the sea air, as if already overpowered with a sense of her own loveliness, and deeply commiserating those who were also about to be crushed beneath the earthquake of her charms, holding in her hand a present from Pinchbeck—a most appropriate one, truly! As it was neither more, nor less, than Jean Paul's "Das Lob der Dummheit," or, "Eulogy of Stupidity!"

"Ah, how—do—you—do?" said she, diffusing the sentence into the one lengthened cadence of a sigh, as like a telegraph she advanced one hand to me, and one to my father, and then making a sort of patronizing nod to Monsieur de Maillepré, she informed him, as she seated herself on the sofa beside my father, that the latter had been an old *adorateur* of hers, and

appealed to him to corroborate the incredible fact, but he did not seem to be able to recollect ever having burdened his soul with such a horrid Egyptian monster species of idolatry. Lady Laura after this, had time to remark, that I (like my father's passion for her), had grown out of all recollection; and asked me if I remembered the pleasant parties she used to give at ———; I said, that I remembered the parties perfectly, indeed that I should never forget them. She then said, bobbing her head like a Chinese Joss, and dancing her card-case upon her knee, in lieu of a chime of joy bells in celebration of her defeat in that quarter, which, like Napoleon, she determined to turn into a victory:

"You have heard, I suppose, that I succeeded in at last bringing about a match between Captain Dapperwit and Miss Leah Abraham; they are as happy as possible, only I must say, they don't express their gratitude to me quite as often, and as warmly, as I think they ought, and as I like to see young people do."

She then turned to my father, addressing herself exclusively to him on the score of her brother, Lord Clanfuddle's, and Captain O'Shindy's crimes and misdemeanours in Paris, in never taking her anywhere, if they could help it. While I had to endure Pinchbeck's reproaches, for not having kept my appointment with him at Professor Von Echokant's lecture upon the regeneration of the human race on the banks of

the Gulgoose river, and that by my culpable neglect, I had perhaps lost the only opportunity I should ever have of hearing that eighth wonder of the world. I said I would endeavour to bear the misfortune with Christian resignation, and only hoped Heaven might be pleased to set it down to my account in lieu of all others.

Having presented him to Monsieur de Maillepré, whom I saw was hugely amused with this magnificent specimen of the ourang-outang tribe, Pinchbeck said with more veracity than good-breeding (query, are they always compatible ?) in an execreable gibberish, which some Cork pedagogue had palmed off upon his too confiding ears for French :

" Oh ! vous êtes du corpse diplomatic, je la appel le corpse Diabolic."

" Que voulez vous, Monsieur ?" said Monsieur de Maillepré, with a shrug, " vaut autant avoir le Diable au corps pour la politique, qu'avoir un Diable de corps Philosophique, comme cela se voit quelque fois."

I was bursting with laughter, but Pinchbeck, only said, taking up " Childe Harold," and bringing his nose nearly to bear upon the page, " Ah ! now, he's getting too far across the Channel for me ; I have not French enough to follow him." After which " polite" aside, he began mumbling and murdering the magnificent poetry he held in his hand, bringing in, " do you see me now ?" with a Cork whine in alto at the end of every stanza. This really was too much for mortal gravity, especially as Monsieur de Maillepré was

busy in making a sketch of him on the back of a letter. I turned to him, and said in Italian *à propos* of this "do you see me now?" refrain to "Childe Harold."

"Do you remember the story of Dante following the ass-driver at Fiezole, who was singing stanzas from the 'Divina Comédia,' adding, however, at the end of each that eternal *arri-là* of Italian muleteers, till poor Dante could stand it no longer, and going up to him, and collaring him, said *Corpo di Bacho! I* never put that infernal *arri-la* to my verses.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Monsieur de Maillepré, "I should rather use that old ape there, who is profaning 'Childe Harold,' as Dante used the blacksmith at Siena, whom he heard singing in the most atrocious voice, and accent, his own canzones over the anvil when the poet rushed into the forge, and broke all the poor wretch's tools to pieces, saying, 'I'll teach you how to mutilate my poetry; *there!* how do you like having *your* property destroyed?' and upon this illustrious precedent I, should like to act, and break every bone in your friend, the ape's, ugly skin."

"Wait at least," replied I, laughing, "till Lady Laura gets one of Bone's enamels of the matchless original."

Perceiving that the latter, according to her old habit, was taking root, I turned to her, saying:

"I am sorry to say, Lady Laura, that papa and I have an appointment at three; and so we must

forego the pleasure of your society this morning, but I have no doubt you will compensate for it some other time."

"Oh, now, that's most unfortunate," said Lady Laura; "for I had intended to take you with me to Hans Walden, the Swedish Sculptor, who is modelling a statuette of me, that Mr. Pinchbeck wants to take out to the Gullgoose river with him."

I stared; for Lady Laura was not only a complete bag of bones, considerably awry, but had a hump that Punch might have mistaken for his own. But as it was a habit with her, whenever she drew upon others for a compliment, and their candour refused to honour the draft, to immediately pay it to herself in "bank of folly" notes. She now said, rising, and with a self-satisfied toss of the head, giving a rearward, yet circular glance at her whole figure:

"For there are few young girls even of your age, Miriam, who possess such a *charenure!* (*tournure*) as mine!"

"Yes, thank heaven! Madame," cried Monsieur de Maillepré, with unfeigned gratitude, "for what would become of our unfortunate sex if there were?"

"Oh! I do like the French, they are *so* polite!" said Lady Laura, bolting this tough truth as a compliment; "it reminds me of a poor young man in Paris, who used to rush out of every room I came into, saying 'it was too much for his feelings, as I was unfortunately married!' Poor Mussew de Codille, they used

to call him Lady Laura O'Shindy's kite, because they said he always flew before me."

"And because, Madame," said Monsieur de Maillepré, with a keen, satirical wit that was of course lost upon this ridiculous woman, but which I enjoyed to the uttermost, "Codille, comme au jeu de l'hombre, gagnait sans avoir fait jouer."

"Ha! ha! ha! *omber*, that's a shadow, in French, isn't it?" said Lady Laura, appealing to me; "oh! yes, I understand, Mussew de Malpray means that he fled to avoid becoming my shadow, very prettily said. I do like compliments, I confess; and they never can be too florid to please me. Now I think that is the great fault of Englishmen, they don't know how to pay compliments; but the Irish and the French are always paying me compliments, and then they laugh so pleasantly after them, that it puts every one in spirits."

"Where, *ma foi*, you ought to have been put some fifty years ago," *sotto voce'd* Monsieur de Maillepré, aside.

At length we got this hyperborean personage, with her full complement of dullness, in the shape of her companion Mr. Thesmothete Pinchbeck, out of the house; not, however, without a threat of many future visits, "now that she had found us out," which she it seems had done, through Dermot; for which I transmitted him that very evening, *viâ* his mother, a sound reprimand, knowing that it would lose nothing by the channel through which I sent it. When

Monsieur de Maillepré took leave, he asked if we would allow him to come of an evening, for he said he wanted to hear (looking at the piano-forte,) whether I sang as well as Grace; and he had a quantity of new duets and other new music just arrived from Italy, Germany, and Paris. I said I should be delighted; but confess I had not the courage to ask him to dinner; however, my father, less alive to the deficiencies of our *ménage* than I was, pressed him to come and dine every day that he was disengaged.

"Thank you, my dear Sir, a thousand times," said he; "but unfortunately I never am free before nine or ten in the evening; but every evening you shall have enough of me, I promise you."

I fully appreciated the delicacy of his refusal, and let him know that I did so, by saying with a smile, as I shook hands with him:

"When Grace comes, I shall not mind how bad the dinners may be that we give you."

"*Bon!*" said he, laughing, "I'm glad to see that like a pious, well brought up *jeune Misse Anglaise*, you think there ought to be no dinner without *Grace*. You see," added he, with another laugh, "I know my *ros bif* and *plombe bouding* by heart."

CHAPTER IX.

When we got to Upper Seymour Street my father remained in the carriage while I went up; I felt no shyness or awkwardness in doing so, for as I have before said, it is only vulgar and under-bred persons who have the unenviable power of making one feel either the one or the other, and Mrs. Vavasour's note had already done the work of time, and made me feel that she and I were old friends; besides, had she not been my Uncle Paulett's first love? and what he had loved, and what had loved him, must surely be loveable. After all, the heart is the only true logician—all its presentiments are correct solutions, to which experience writes *probatum est.* Mrs. Vavasour was just the age at which Diane de Poictiers had made captive the heart of Henry the Second of France, forty-two; and if *la*

belle Diane was only half as handsome as Mrs. Vavasour was then, all I can say is, that Henry the Second had more sense than most men in love are troubled with. She was very like what I remembered her son, only with that almost holy expression which a deep-rooted sorrow imparts to beautiful features—that is, when the conflict has ceased, and memory, that moonlight of the mind, has shed over the ruins of the heart that pale mystic light which touches them into beauty by a halo from above.

She folded me in her arms, and then said, standing at a little distance from me:

"And so this is little red boots, of whom I have heard so much from Sir George and from Philip. I assure you he returned from —— quite *épris*, I don't know whether it was with the dancing or the *danseuse*, but both I suspect."

"Not very likely," said I, laughing, "for Fiametta was his love."

"Oh, haven't you heard of the split in that quarter? Lady Paulett last year in Paris asked him, *comme cela se pratique chez les mamans anglaises*, whether he was quite sure of having Marmiondale, and of being able to make a good settlement upon Fia; whereat, Philip got into one of his terrible white rages, and said he knew nothing about Marmiondale, but that he was quite sure of not being able to settle anything upon Miss Paulett, inasmuch as that no earthly power would induce him to marry her. 'Oh, very well,' said Lady

Paulett, I'm very glad of it, for now I hope Fia will hear reason, and accept Lord Mountflummery.' "

"Lord Mountflummery!" cried I, "that wretch of a man!"

"Why, what do you know about him, dear?" said Mrs. Vavasour.

I then gave her the little episode about Miss Sharpe's sister, and the bridal party in the Temple Church.

"Ah! my dear child," replied Mrs. Vavasour, shaking her head, with a melancholy smile, "that, I fear, is only a very short scene in the drama of vice, which men, being the lord chamberlains of their own morality, or rather immorality, have in all times licensed themselves to act; and as long as women, as a body, are so degraded, so selfish, and so mean, as to uphold, not only by their toleration, but by their co-operation, the oppressors and outragers of their sex, and to broach that coarse, indelicate, and purely English tenet, that 'a reformed rake makes the best husband!' you cannot be surprised that, like the game of the dagger and the ring, in French and German fairs, where men get upon a hobby in a giddy-round, and run full tilt with a dagger through a ring, that has some coveted prize behind it, which can only be pierced and carried off through the ring, marriage with us should be on a similar footing, and hearts be pierced and broken *à discrétion*, to afford our lords and masters a little momentary convenience, or excitement; for, like the

prizes of the round-about, the hearts are generally flung away as soon as obtained, all their attraction consisting in their pursuit."

"But surely," said I, "Fiametta cannot know how shamefully that Lord Mountflummery behaved to that poor Miss Sharpe, who, if not his equal in position, at all events has a heart to break, and a character to lose."

"Why, yes, she is perfectly aware of it, since they used to laugh over it, I understand, together; and so would half the Misses in England, for they are brought up to sophisticate the commandments of God in a sort of double crucible: one side for female morals, rigid and immutable, the other for male, with a corrosive sublimate of custom and human law, which neutralizes men's worst vices. I only wonder the same wisdom and justice has not long ago decided that it was no crime for men to commit murder; but when committed by them, was merely to be called, 'a little affair of temper;' the gibbet and the block, of course, remaining in full force to punish female assassins; and, indeed, if they had, they could hardly have achieved a more flagrant state of social immorality than their present one-sided code, as far as it goes, has accomplished. However, so it will be till the time comes for redress. The masters, of course, must be served before the slaves; the world will now go on progressing by great strides; every ten years some great abuse, under whose baneful effects men groan, will be, by their

united resistance, shaken off; but it will be much longer before the world, with regard to women, stamps the dust of ages from its sandals, their emancipation, not indeed from the sphere for which God has ordained them—a holy, if in this world a seemingly inferior one, —but from the bitter injustice and foul tyranny of men, as it will be the great battle of Armageddon, the final struggle of society, in short, the commencement of the real Christian era, which for eighteen hundred and fifty years the world has fought for, bled for, died for, in short, done anything and everything but lived for, according to the true spirit of Christianity; but so it was to be. Much rubbish must be dug out before a foundation for a building can be made; many stones hewn, many beams planed and severed, much clay kneaded and hardened by fire into bricks, many opposites dove-tailed into unity, and cemented by labour, before a goodly edifice can be raised, and many intellects set to work separately on its different portions, all tending to one final purpose, before the heterogeneous materials are united in a great and magnificent whole; in short, I do believe, that as the physical world was made out of chaos, so must the moral world be willed out of the same, but by a longer process."

"I think so too, dear Mrs. Vavasour; but though the *fiat lux* has not yet been pronounced on the latter, still, even in this moral twilight, there are certain things that the glow-worm conscience must even by its tiniest light point out to us as being wrong; and

nothing could induce me to marry such a man as Lord Mountflummery, knowing, as Fiametta does, his heartless treatment of another woman."

"Ah! that is because you are a straight-minded, honest-hearted, independent girl, and don't perhaps think, like most English young ladies, that to be married, no matter to what, or to whom, is the one thing necessary in this world."

"Then I suppose," said I, "that your son don't go to the Pauletts' any longer?"

"On the contrary," rejoined Mrs. Vavasour, "for there is no end to the manœuvring that goes on in society. Lady Paulett especially begged of him to come there, at least when she had *réunions*, that the world might not suppose there ever had been anything between Fiametta and him: 'And as there never has been,' said Philip, with one of his haughty curls of the lip, 'I shall certainly accept your invitation, whenever you have anything worth coming to.' And now tell me, Miriam, all about yourself, and how you came to leave that school, and where your sister is: in short, everything—at least everything that you choose to tell me."

"Oh, dear Mrs. Vavasour! then that will be everything;" and, as briefly as I could, I then told her of my father's coming for me, the terrible wreck that he now was, and Grace's engagement to Monsieur de Maillepré, and how much I liked him, not, however, omitting my qualms at his coming to that horrid place

in Maddox Street. "But is it not," concluded I, "altogether a painful, a perplexing, and, above all, a false position?"

"It is indeed," said she, taking my hand in the kindest manner, as she put her handkerchief to her eyes. "But you speak to one who can feel for you, my dear child, from being in a still more false and cruel position; for I am waiting in all the torments of the most anxious suspense, not knowing when my own son will return from abroad; and when he does, ignorant whether he will condescend to come and stay with his poor mother, for fear of offending his father's rich brother, who may, or may not, according to whichever point his unprincipled caprice veers towards the last, make him his heir; but, as our fates seem different, yet similar, inasmuch as that for both, the ordinary course of things has been turned aside, we must only try and help one another. These rooms are certainly not very splendid, still they are tolerably large, and airy, and, according to your description of those in Maddox Street, must be an improvement on them."

"Oh!" interrupted I, "by comparison, they are those of a palace; besides, *you* are in them, and that at once gives them a look of home and refinement."

"I'm afraid you are a little flatterer, Miriam: but if these rooms are really in themselves more agreeable, you must persuade your father and Monsieur de Maillepré to come here of an evening, instead of staying there; and besides, it will be a more effectual

way of keeping your poor father out of temptation. I'll go down to the carriage-door with you when you go, and ask him."

"Oh! thank you a thousand times, dear, kind Mrs. Vavasour!—how very good of you!"

"How very kind to myself. But I have one piece of good news for you, Miriam, which is, that your Uncle Paulett is expected back in a month."

"Then you have heard from him?"

"No," said she, colouring slightly; "but I go down every morning to see something or other done, or got ready in his house. You know it is close by, in Upper Berkeley Street."

"Oh! why were you not there entirely?" exclaimed I, giving utterance to my wishes before reflection had time to check me.

"Because," said she, with a sort of calm sadness, "my mother chose me to marry Mr. Vavasour on account of his reputed wealth; and you ought to know, my dear child, by this time, unfortunately for yourself, that our fates are more often made for us, than by us."

"But I don't mean at first," said I, "but when you became a widow."

"How do you know," said she, smiling, and trying to parry my question, "that he gave me the opportunity?"

"Oh! I'm sure he must have done so."

"Well, if you must know," and the tears filled her

eyes as she spoke, "I did not like to give him a wreck, in exchange for the noblest and truest heart that ever beat in a human bosom," and she then gave me a few of the details of her wedded martyrdom, which was, indeed, a terrible history, so terrible, that I exclaimed:

"And this! in a nominally Christian country? Was there then no one of sufficient moral courage and moral rectitude, to defend you against such a dastardly villain, though he was called your husband?"

"Ah! my dear child, you little know the world in this nominally Christian country, if you think that even individually, still less collectively, it would ever take the part of the weak against the strong, especially when the strong bears the name of husband, and the weak of wife. The only part it could take would be a passive one, that of not countenancing the aggressor, whichever it might be; but that is precisely the part it will not take, for fear of in any way compromising self, or jeopardizing its own little sordid interests, personal or collateral. And what else could you expect from a people whose very religion is political, and not spiritual; as by the phrase of 'Church and State,' is meant substance and shadow, the State being the reality, and the Church merely the decent appendage, the obligato phantom, which it is necessary to respect, as an evidence that the sun of prosperity continues to shine upon the substance. Everything in England is party spirit in politics, and hence it is that there is no real patriotism, while all is cliqueism in the press,

which accounts for there being no such thing as justice, personal or literary, praise or censure being chiefly done to order, and not according to merit or demerit."

"What a disgusting state of things," said I.

"Very; but they will get worse before they are better; for evils must always exhaust themselves before a re-action takes place. It is hard for those who have to bear "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" during the intermediate state of transition; but still the world *en masse* ought to be grateful to abuses, as but for them, it would have neither improvement nor knowledge. All men are selfish; but, Miriam, never marry a man in whom even the nature of his love proves that self is all!"

"Now, dear Mrs. Vavasour," said I, "do add to your already great kindness, by giving me a piece of advice. Do you not think that I had better send Nelly over to Ireland to bring Grace quietly over, unknown to my aunts, that she may avoid the storm that will not fail to burst upon her devoted head, if they are applied to for their permission, after everything has been arranged without them; though I mean, of course, that Nelly should be armed with a letter from papa, as her credentials, to be forwarded to my aunts after she and Grace have got safely away. But first I should tell you, that Nelly is our old nurse, and next to dear Uncle Paulett, I do believe the very kindest and best-hearted creature in the whole world."

Mrs. Vavasour reflected for a few minutes, and then said:

"On no account: with your father in the state he is in, it would never do to have you left in the house alone with him; neither would it do for your sister, at her age, to take so long a journey with only Nelly, however good a person she may be. But in another fortnight, at farthest, I must know whether Philip is coming here or not; and if he does, he will perhaps go with me; but if not, then I will go alone, at least, with only a man and maid, and bring your sister over. So write to-night, and tell her that she may expect an unknown but faithful old friend to come for her, in about a month from this."

"Oh! thank you, dear Mrs. Vavasour," cried I, throwing my arms round her neck; "how kind you are! You certainly ought to have been married to Uncle Paulett, for you think of every one, and every thing!"

"Then," said she, smiling, "I must think of asking you if there is such a thing as an inn where I can put up at, in the flourishing town of Clanfuddle?"

"No less than two," laughed I; "and thereby hangs a tale, or rather a sign, which I understand is also a wonder; for you must know the two hostelries are rivals, the original one having from time immemorial had the name of 'The Hog in Armour,' kept by one Lanty O'Toole, a tenant of Lord Clanfuddle's; but some ten years ago, I hear that an interloper from

Cork came, and had the audacity to set up an opposition 'Hog in Armour' facing it; upon this, Lanty O'Toole goes to Lord Clanfuddle, and asks permission to mount his Lordship's portrait for a sign, which the latter agrees to; but Lanty, to make surety doubly sure, the very first day that he displays his patron's effigy, has written under it, in gold letters a foot long—

"'This is the old original Hog in Armour.'"

Mrs. Vavasour, knowing Lord Clanfuddle, laughed heartily at this story, and declared that Lawrence could not have made half so good a likeness of him. She then accompanied me down stairs, and invited my father so cordially and gracefully to dine with her whenever we could, that he accepted the invitation for the next day. Take them all in all, the next three weeks deserved to be ranked among the happiest of my life. I not only was so happy, but had so much happiness in expectation!—my Uncle Paulett's return! Grace's marriage! the delightful evenings we passed at Mrs. Vavasour's, where we sang, played, and built castles in the air—at least I did—for as Mrs. Vavasour said, she went farther, heaven being the only place she built on now. My father, it is true, used to fall asleep; but at all events that was better than leaving him to those horrible orgies with Tom Lutron. Often also I used to breakfast with Mrs. Vavasour, and get back before twelve for my father's levée; and these

days were doubly happy, for we used to go to the house in Upper Berkeley Street; and if there is one happiness on earth greater than another, next to being with those we love, it is the making preparations for their being with us, anticipating all their wants and wishes, and at the same time their delight at having them forestalled.

On one occasion I remarked, that a certain pair of purple velvet slippers, lined with fur, and very daintily embroidered with golden violets, had been placed before the easy chair in my uncle's dressing-room. Also, in the chair, an eider down cushion, pourtraying an embroidered likeness of Fido, which for spirit, softness, and vitality would not have discredited Landseer.

"Ah!" said I, as a few tears fell upon this effigy of fidelity—for so are all tokens of affection sooner or later baptized in this world—"what a pity!"

"What is it that is a pity?" asked Mrs. Vavasour, as she came into the room, with one of those little miniature Vienna clocks which struck the hours, with a faint chime of fairy-like music, to the air of that old romance of "Au ciel tout se retrouve," which she now placed on a little table beside the great chair.

"Why, that you are not always at your post; for it seems to me that you ought to be here—that this is your proper place; and it is all nonsense talking about wrecks, for there are some wrecks more precious to their owners than the richest argosy that was ever freighted. And do you know, you and Uncle Paulett remind me

of those broken arches one sometimes sees in beautiful ruins, where the pillars are still standing as firmly as ever, though that which united them is riven, but which the shadows of the evening sun, by spanning a mystic arch, seems again to re-unite."

"With this difference, Mirry," replied she, with a melancholy smile, "that the evening shadows of your arch meet on earth, and ours can only meet in heaven."

"But I don't see why that should be."

"I'll tell you why; that is, I'll tell you a Greek fable, which might have been a myth then, but which is a *fact* now. Love, once upon a time, became enamoured of Chione, the niece of Plutus; but Hymen, tempting the avarice of Plutus by immense bribes, he sacrificed Chione to him. In due time, after leaving nothing undone to make her wretched, and succeeding to a miracle, Hymen died; for in those days, unlike ours, Hymen did *not* last for ever. Soon after, Love returned, and Chione opened her heart eagerly to admit him; but Hymen had left such a damp, dull gloom over this once glowing and happy spot, that poor Love soon caught cold, and died, too!"

I shook my head, and sighed, for the moral was too pointed to escape me.

"No doubt," thought I, "it is these mutilated fates that stalk through the world, and are clumsily joined to other broken halves which never were originally intended for them, that cause all the hopeless super-

human misery—which ravages society like a pestilence; —in short, these 'combinations of disjointed things.'"

It was a few evenings after the above conversation that we were at Mrs. Vavasour's, my father, as usual, asleep in an easy chair, Mrs. Vavasour at work, and Monsieur de Maillepré and I singing that pretty duet from "La Maison à Vendre" of

"Chère Elise, dis-moi je t'aime,"

when a carriage stopped at the door, and a thundering knock gave notice of an arrival.

"Oh! Philip, at last," exclaimed Mrs. Vavasour, letting her work drop from her hands, and rushing to the top of the stairs. Three minutes after, the door being open, I saw Tom Lutron, and heard his unmistakeable voice, in answer to Mrs. Vavasour's anxious interrogation of "My dear boy, is that you at last?" say:

"Upon me soul, Madam, this exsades me most sanguine expectations. I fail, or rather I felt, that an apology was jew (due) to a lady like yourself, for invading your house (not having the honour of your acquaintance) at such an unsaisonable hour; but when you resave me as your dear boy, and ask if that's me at last! I can only assure you, Madam, of me sinsare gratitude, and that I'm not the boy to disappoint any lady's expectations. So be satisfied, this is the last time I'll ever kape you waiting, since I find ye ex-

pected me. 'Blessed are they that do not expect.' True that, as that God made Moses; for I, who expected nothing, or at most tay and turn out, find, saving your presence, Ma'am, about the finest woman I ever saw in my life, expecting me. Look up, Tom—there's money bid for ye, ye dog!" concluded he, with a wink, as he pulled up his collar; while poor Mrs. Vavasour staggered back into the room, pale, frightened, and disappointed, and sank down on the first chair.

Monsieur de Maillepré stood taking an inventory of his future relation, and I wished the earth would open and swallow us all up, so as to prevent any further mutual scrutiny or conversation.

"Monsieur de Maillepré, me future cousin, I presume? Sur, I have the honour of welcoming you into our family; and though I say it, that ought not to say it, you might go farther, and fare worse, Sur."

Monsieur de Maillepré bowed, and said he fully appreciated his happiness.

And I my shame!

"Miss Miriam Sedley, your most obajent," said my cousin, since cousin he was. "You are aware that Parliament met yesterday, and there is to be a great debate upon a new Bill for the suppression of Popery—"

("Would to Heaven," thought I, "that there could be an Act of Parliament for the suppression of vulgar relations, at least of Irish cousins.")

" —which being a staunch Orangeman—(grape man, at all events, I said,) I am extremely anxious to hear; but as this packet arrived from the Foreign Office, just as I was going down to the House—and I know how anxious you always are for letters from abroad—I said to Blucher and Spanker, none of your thorough-bred airs, ye divils, for it's post-horses ye'll have to be; and take this packet to Miss Miriam, though she never wonce (once) did ye the honour of taking a back view of your ears, and setting me off in me curricle, when I gave far worse-looking fellows the go-by in the Park; but never mind—good for evil, is Tom Lutron's motto; for the family one of *depressus extoller* don't happen to shute (suit) my taste, as I have no fancy for being humbled; and as for the other half of the motto—though, thanks to my own exertions, I'm often elevated, as they say in England, I've never yet been exalted, and I'll be hanged if I ever am; and as for taking the old motto literally, egad! as long as the English Lords of misrule continue to legislate for Ireland, there's little fear that they won't *depress us* enough."

As it is the peculiar and enviable privilege of great minds and noble natures, to occasionally raise by their magnetic power even the most base and sordid ones to their own level, so is it the happy art of perfect *savoir-vivre* and high breeding, to unvulgarize to a certain degree the most commonplace or underbred, who come within the mesmeric influence of their own polished

and highly-tempered manners; therefore, taking at the rebound Tom Lutron's pun, Monsieur de Maillepré entered into a political discussion with him, which had the twofold good effect of relieving Mrs. Vavasour and myself from his overpowering coarseness, and drawing him out to the best advantage, which so insensibly flattered the better portion of his vanity, that it piqued his self-love into being almost gentlemanlike before he took his departure, which, thank Heaven! he soon did, from his anxiety to hear the before-mentioned debate; and I thanked him very sincerely for his good nature in bringing me my packet; for with all his faults he had that golden, and too much underrated virtue of good nature, which in the republic of our moral qualities may be considered in the light of pscychological almsgiving; while good temper ranks as good principle, which systematically and uniformly provides for the wants and wishes of those dependent on it. I could not even open my packet till I heard the last sound of his wheels, though I saw it was from Mademoiselle de Guilleragues, and when I did, her envelope only contained these few melancholy lines, dated four days back.

"My dear Child,

"Alas! poor Bloom Belzoni has ceased to suffer, and is now in heaven: a fitter place for all pure, true and good natures than our miserable and all-corroding earth. She breathed her last to-night at ten o'clock

in my arms. Her death was as gentle as her life, with this difference, that the former, thank God! appeared free from pain. The inclosed packet has been some time in my possession; but her strict injunction was, that it was never to be given to you till after her death. Her poor father is inconsolable, but I do not think he will be long after her, for neither hearts nor plants last long when they have been uprooted. It seems almost a sacrilege to allude to anything joyous at such a moment, but I was truly rejoiced at hearing of dear Grace's intended marriage with Monsieur de Maillepré. Selon la Duchesse de C— T— c'est un charmant garçon sous tous les rapports, un grand seigneur et un digne et brave homme pardessus le marché. I shall certainly be in London for the wedding. God bless you. Ever your affectionate and faithful friend,

"ELODIE DE GUILLERAGUES."

"Paris, Rue du Bac,
"Ce 15 Janvier, 1819."

I was so blinded by tears, that it was some time before I could read what seemed to me almost like a communication from that shadowy land where we shall all go, but from whence none return to show us the way. I had no sooner opened the packet, than a lock of long fair hair, which I knew at once had been Bloom's, and a small diamond dove, attached to an almost imperceptibly fine Venetian chain, met my

view; it had belonged to her mother, and she had often shown it to me when I was a child. Here are her last words:

"Paris, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin,
"November 10th, 1818.

"When you receive this, dearest Miriam, the hand that writes, and the heart that dictates, these few lines, will both be cold. While I am yet able, let me then tell you how much I love you and Grace, and dear Sir George; and not the less that it is the last time in this world that I shall have the power of doing so. Before I make you a confession, Miriam, which none but you have ever heard, and I know ever will hear (not even Grace, since I enjoin the most sacred secrecy), I must touch upon more worldly matters, and of more personal interest to yourself. My father, you know, was once the wealthiest merchant in the Levant; but ever since I can remember, he said he was poor, and appears to be so. Nevertheless, I have sometimes had misgivings on that point; but be it as it may, I have entreated him to divide between you, and Grace, whatever he may have intended for me—be it much, or be it little—giving you, however, the Benjamin's portion. His answer was, that after providing for me, he had always intended to leave all he possessed in the world to your good uncle, Sir George, with the reversion to you and Grace. So that you see, dearest Miriam, if you are not one day rich, it will be because my father

and I were not not so, in gold, but only in gratitude and affection to you and yours; therefore, whatever the deed may be, I am very sure you will all three acknowledge and accept the will that framed it. And now to accomplish the painful task that I have imposed upon myself.

"Last May, as you are aware, I went on a visit to Madame de St. Florentin, at Château Le Henri, near Caën. You have no idea what a paradise of a place it is, or was, when I was there; one blush of roses, with the nightingales singing to them all night long; nice old moats, *plaisances,* and *charmilles* without, and plenty of armour and old Bayeux tapestry within, upon all of which chivalric eyes had once rested, and under which chivalric hearts had once glowed; in short, this old *castel* is at once the cradle, and the tomb, of romance. What wonder, then, that it has been both to me? You remember, Miriam—oh yes! you cannot forget it—that once when you were quite a child, but I was about fifteen, I was not allowed for some time to come and see you. My father, on our first coming to Paris, told me why. It was because the son of the man who had ruined my poor mother was on a visit to your uncle. Alas! Miriam, it is astonishing how wide the roots of evil spread; further than those who sow the seed can ever dream, or I think the very worst would pause before they bequeathed so dire a heritage to the yet unborn.

"I had not been a fortnight at Château Le Henri,

before that man's son, with his tutor, came on a visit for three days. I kept my room on pretence of illness, but from real horror at the idea of meeting him; for I hated him for *his* father's and *my* mother's sake; but as we do not make our own fate, neither can we escape it. On the fourth day, there were to be people from Caën to dinner, and music in the evening; and Madame de St. Florentin insisted upon my coming down. I could not describe to you the sort of reversionary shame (not to say agony) I felt at meeting this young man, therefore I will not attempt to do so; I even winced more than usual under the sense of my deformity. Was not his father the indirect cause of it? for had he not deprived me of my mother? And what is a child without a mother, but the target and plaything of misfortune? I never once looked at him, though he sang some things from the 'Semiramide,' in a voice at once so masterly, and so imploring, that my very soul was made captive by a chain of such insidious harmony, that I struggled against it in vain, for it was too soft to resist, and yet too strong to break.

"Madame de St. Florentin then insisted upon my singing; and of all things, chose that Venetian canzonet that you used to like, 'Come si chiame questo ragazzo?' When I ceased, *his* applause was the most cordial; and he said: 'May I ask if that is published, or is it in manuscript?' I was obliged to raise my eyes to his to answer him. They were those sort

of loadstone eyes, which appear to draw everything irresistibly towards them; but when they looked at yours intentionally, they then seemed to have a sort of mysterious polar influence, towards which, by some secret affinity, one's heart was compelled to turn, or in trying not to do so, to flutter, and rust within its narrow compass.

"The next day, the next, and many next days after that. The tutor, a stiff, impassible-looking man went away to see William the Conqueror's tomb, in l'Abbaye aux Hommes, at Caën; Matilda's, in l'Abbaye aux Dames; Charlotte Corday's house, and several other excursions; all day in some way or other, we were together; and in the evening Madame de St. Florentin used to have the dessert and the guitars brought into one of those beautiful old *charmilles*, where the moon kept running in and out, as if playing at hide and seek with its own beams, till it finally mirrored itself in one broad silver sheet over the waters of the lake beyond. Sometimes, Madame de St. Florentin would be called away to visitors, and we would be left alone with the music and the moonlight—once, and only once, he paid me a compliment, though I think he must have been laughing at me, for am I not deformed? But still there was something I had never heard, nor felt before, in any other voice, or even in his till then; it seemed to sink gently and subtlely down into the innermost depths of my heart, in the way that I can fancy a bee whispers into the bell of a flower, till

it extracts all the honey from it; and yet all he said was: 'you are very like a beautiful picture I once saw of Beatrice Cenci, not the well-known one at the Barbarini, but one I saw of her at Albano, done when she was quite young, before sorrow and shame, and their hard task-master insanity, had branded her.' Am I? said I, and there the subject ended.

"On another evening, I dropped a bracelet; he stooped to look for it in the grass, and when he had found it, remained kneeling while he re-clasped it on my arm. Miriam! upon the solemn assurance of a fleeting soul, I swear to you he never uttered the word Love to me; that is in reference to himself, and myself, how could he? you know what I am, and the barrier which nature, or rather accident has placed between me and the power of inspiring such a feeling; and it was not His fault if nature had given to the inflections of his voice a depth, and a tenderness, which lent to even the most commonplace words, a charm and an unction, which generally only the most fond and the most impassioned possess. No, we talked of Italy, of music, of dear———, of you, Mirry, in short, of anything and everything but love; and yet, to the suicidal fanaticism of my own wild heart, it seemed *all love!* Did I live, I could not for shame tell you my weakness; but I am dying, Miriam, and I would fain leave what I fear was a sin behind me. Pray for me, dear Miriam, for I hope to go where I shall find many a prayer as a memento of you, for,

surely that love must be even pure enough for Heaven which is filtered through prayer.

"Had he loved me, it would have been worse, for with our parents' sin on both our heads, what *it* had separated could never have been united.

"The day at length came when we parted; you know that day always does come. You will think me very weak, very contemptible, I fear, to—to—what shall I say, to be so engrossed by a person who did not think of me; it is weak to faint, but can we help it? From that hour I knew I had made a compact with death, (the only friend that could come to my assistance); and, when the final moment of our separation arrived, and he kissed my hand, as is the custom of this country, I felt that that compact was sealed.

"I returned home, I could not of all people in the world tell my poor father, still less could I tell any one else: I had, like many others, to devour my grief in silence, and intense grief, like every other serious malady, must be fatal when it strikes inward. Love me still, dear Miriam, but don't regret me, for I am very happy, as I feel that those who die young, no matter how terrible the suffering may have been that causes their death, are God's especial favourites; they found the cup of life too bitter, and He in mercy dashed it from them. I also feel the nearer I approach to them, that through the portals of death, lies the only real life, and that what we term such in this world is but a dream, or rather a nightmare to the

many—a light and happy dream to some, but still, even to such, only a brief and fleeting vision: besides, the spirit once freed from its corporeal fetters, must be free, and as such, partake of the ubiquity of the Great Spirit from which it emanates. So you see, Miriam, I am only going, that I may be with you, and with all I love on earth in reality. And now, good bye, dearest Miriam; wear for my sake, the little emblem of peace I enclose you—wear it next your heart, Mirry, and may it never desert so gentle a nest. When you come to Paris, I know you will come and see me: don't strew roses or heliotrope, mignionette, myrtle, or any other flowers on my grave, but violets, for I loved them well in life. There were beautiful ones, both white and purple, in the woods at Château Le Henri; he used to bring me a bouquet of them every morning: I have them all, though they have faded and gone before me: and dear Mademoiselle de Guilleragues, who has been so good and kind to me, has promised, that when I am dead, they shall be laid on my heart, and buried with me. Once more, good bye, and that God may bless you all, will be the last prayer in death, as it has been the first in life, of—

"Your sincerely affectionate friend,

"Bloom Belzoni."

Oh, Death! so terrible at all times to those whom he leaves, is doubly so in the first he takes from us,

for it is to the living he gives all the horrors of the grave. As like all other despots, on his chosen he bestows great privileges, and to them brings glad tidings; but the poor bereaved can only rend their hearts, (that miserable earthly garment of the soul), at his dread, and inexorable favoritism. I thought of my extraordinary vision, or second sight, or whatever it had been, at the hotel in Jermyn Street; and I was so overpowered, that I had scarcely sufficient presence of mind to conceal this afflicting, and on all accounts, sacred packet; but even without the solemn injunction to secrecy it contained, I would not for worlds that Mrs. Vavasour should have seen it; for though he was not mentioned by name, she would have known that her son was the person alluded to, having good reason to remember the fate of Madame Belzoni, and not being one of those highly culpable mothers, who think their sons infallible, and call their trifling with a woman's feelings, "a little flirtation," or dismiss their grosser vices with the demoralizing truism, that "young men will be young men," knowing, as she did, that a vicious and heartless youth generally makes a villanous and hypocritical old age. And although, according to poor Bloom's statement, it did not appear that Philip Vavasour had been in this instance to blame, yet I am very sure his mother would not have wholly acquitted him, but would have thought of the poor broken-hearted girl in her grave, and upon that one fact, have recorded a verdict against him.

I was taken home more dead than alive, and had a severe illness. Nothing could be kinder than Mrs. Vavasour was; she nursed me night and day in a very different manner to that in which I had been *un*-attended at Concave House, for Grace had written her word that she would not hear of her coming over for her before the end of March; and as she had also had a letter from her son saying, that it was not likely he should be in England before April or May, she had nothing to do but to kindly devote her whole time to me. My poor father, too, used to sit till late at night by my bed-side, and often would put aside the curtain and say, in an humble, gentle, and affectionate voice, like that of a child reporting itself out of mischief:

"You see Mirry, darling, I'm here; I'm not down stairs with Tom."

Poor Father! at all events there was no stiff-necked stubborn pride in your nature, and where that is not, no vice can totally devastate, for humility is to the heart, what cleanliness is to metal—it prevents it from ever thoroughly corroding. In those long sleepless nights, I would think of poor Bloom—not indeed as poor Bloom, but as a happy and beatified spirit; free in the immutable eternity of a glorious certainty, communing with God, and knowing all things—even to that great dark enigma of the present, which the future alone can solve, of why so many longings, wants, capacities, and necessities *are in our nature*, which *are not in our fate;* so many harmonious aspirations and

divine foreshadowings which have no realization on earth;—yes, it is—it must be, that we have left them above at our creation, and can only snatch at their echoes and shadows here—till we again rejoin them above. Oh! fruitless toil, then, to seek them here! and repeating the last two lines of Chiabrera's epitaph, I fell into a calm sleep:

"Tu meglio consigliato cercatelo,
Sul Monte Calvario!"

CHAPTER X.

Spring had returned, and had contrived to penetrate even through the smoke of London; but my poor father, instead of reviving with it, appeared to be drooping fast, as it seemed to me each day that I missed a leaf from the few that remained upon his poor withered tree of life; he no longer liked to drive out, he said that it fatigued him; but when there was any sun he liked walking up and down on the broad flags in George Street, opposite the church. Mrs. Vavasour had set out on her kind journey to bring Grace over, and two days after her son had arrived he came to see me, and to bring me a dictated letter from dear Uncle Paulett, whom he had left in Paris to have the cataract taken off of his eyes, and immediately after—oh, joyful words! he was to return to England. Philip Vavasour certainly was very hand-

some—fascinating, I believe most young ladies would have called him; but I suppose mine is a frigid and unimpressionable nature, for I'm sure I never could be in love with any man who did not get me much into his debt, by first loving me exceedingly, and letting me see that he did so, even oftener than hear it.

Philip came every evening, and sang with me, and Monsieur de Maillepré; poor Bloom had not exaggerated the charm of his voice. He also contrived to embellish my life with those thousand little delicate nameless attentions, which derive their value from being imperceptible to all, save to the person on whom they are bestowed. The ugly rooms in Maddox Street began to be tricked into a fictitious grace with books, and flowers, that they had never known before; for the few and far between plants which I had hitherto been able to indulge in, had only served to make their ugliness more glaring, like a solitary jewel in the toad style on the forehead of an ugly woman; but now profusion, as it often does, covered much that was defective. Each morning some fresh attention greeted me when I came down, yet still I did not love Philip Vavasour, for I loved his mother too well, and regretted poor Bloom too sincerely, to do that in a hurry; for it seemed to me that I had a long account to settle with him, about both first.

I had an irrepressible longing to ascertain what his feelings had really been towards the latter; but linked as it was with her dying confession, her name seemed

to me too sacred to mention lightly before him. Could I have done so, I would have trusted to the infallible freemasonry all women possess upon those subjects (more especially when they have a personal interest in them) to discover the exact truth; but not being able to broach the matter, I was obliged to endure all the torments of doubt and suspense, till one evening one of those little magic chances, which so often achieve, in a moment, that which we have been whole days and nights in vain trying to bring about, brought the long-wished for opportunity. In looking over some music, some manuscript barcaroles, and romances, that poor Bloom had given me, fell accidentally out of a book; they could not but recall the donor, and I burst into tears.

"Ah! poor Miss Belzoni," said Philip tenderly, but without any emotion; "she was very fond of you; we often used to talk of you. When I met her last summer in Normandy, what a nice girl she was! and would have been beautiful, but for that defect in her figure, which, after all, was less disfiguring than anything of the kind I ever saw."

"But did you not think her very beautiful in spite of it?" said I, raising my eyes to his, and looking into them, with an intensity that must have drawn out any hidden truth.

"Yes, very; but it was a sort of supernatural beauty that never excited an earthly feeling; it was admiration—pure unleavened admiration—such as one might

have for sculptured perfection, where the heart remains as cold as the statue—"

"Which once Pigmalion had worshipped into animation," rejoined I, continuing my inquisitorial glance.

"Ah! that was *once*," said he, with a smile, "but such things don't happen twice; but I was wrong to liken her to a statue; that is too insentient—too unelastic. She was more the incarnation of one of those wild German tales; in fact, one of those elfin creations, the offspring of a moonbeam, and a wave, which love might touch either into mortal life,—or death."

I shuddered at the unintentional truth of this simile, but, at the same time, there was an incubus removed from my mind. Oh, no! he had neither loved her, nor trifled with her; for, in either case, he would not have spoken as he had done of her—conscience or regret would have equally prevented him. Still, though he came every day, sometimes twice a-day, and did all he could to make me think he loved me, he never told me so. Once or twice that we were alone, he appeared hurried and agitated, as if on the point of saying something; and then he would suddenly seize his hat, and rush out of the room. All this sort of wayward, unaccountable, and apparently causeless frenzy agitated and made me very unhappy, chiefly to feel that he had the power of doing so. I did not know what to make of it; but I knew what I ought to do—keep out of his way—and I resolved to do it. In accordance with this

plan, I was one morning sitting in my own room, having given orders to be denied to him, when Nelly entered, with a letter that had just come by the two-penny post, and two moss-roses, the very first hot-house ones I had seen, as it was only the beginning of April.

"Masther Philip, Mish," as Nelly still called him, "wid hish complimentsh."

"Is he below?" said I, half hoping she'd say yes, as I took the buds, and put them into water.

"No, Missh; he'sh gone, and bid me say he cudn't come dis evening, because he was going out."

Though I had told them to say that I was engaged with my father, and could not see him, if he should come in the evening, yet I bit my lip with vexation, to think that he had no intention of coming, but was going out, as if it was a pleasure! and an amusement! and *I* had not been in the world. I'm sure, I wish I hadn't; but, after all, what was it to me where he went? and so I took up the letter, and opened it so brusquely, that I nearly tore it in two, which would only have been suiting the action to the word, if I had; it was from Miss Sherwood, and what between the spelling, and the writing, I think I could have become fluent over an Egyptian obelisk, or mummy, in half the time. At length, I deciphered that Helen Penrose had left Concave House very soon after I did, and that Jessy Fane was to sail for Calcutta next year with my correspondent. And then came the

cream of the letter, or perhaps the cream of tartar would be the more appropriate phrase.

"You must know," continued Miss Sherwood, "that the great run for the lady's plate (and dishes!) came off yesterday, when Glauber Rodolphus was taken, or rather bolted; and therefore did not get the plate. Great betting on the favourite for a fortnight before; two to one against Omeny, were Jemima's odds; and I also took James the Second against the field.

"Up to the day before yesterday it was not known which of the damsels it was to be; there was but one thing certain, *i.e.*, that Glauber Rodolphus, as in those Spanish bull fights, you used to tell us of, was, as he himself would say, to be lead to the halter, having been captured by a lass-o! But it seems that on this memorable day, the contest ran so high between the James and the Omeny, as to which had the best right to become Mrs. Glauber Rodolphus Perkins, the second, as they had at length insisted upon the death of the first Mrs. Perkins, that Miss Omeny drew forth those eternal scissors of hers, some say to stab herself with, while others (of which number is Jemima) declare that it was, like a second Solomon, to divide Glauber Rodolphus between them. Miss James screamed, and fainted. Glauber Rodolphus drew out his lancet, and bled her in the arm, by which means he got another day's reprieve; as he said, a wedding would be too hagitating a ceremony for her.

"At sight of the blood, Miss Omeny fainted also; and when she came to, abdicated in favour of Miss James, generously declaring that she would not be the cause of any more bloodshed. Well, this morning the bride looked as lovely as a new white satin bonnet, and plenty of starch in her face and cap could make her; and the bridal party glass-coached it to church, the victim Omeny acting as bridesmaid, and I suppose I need not tell you, all Mammon House in full grin, over the wall, with this delicate attention on the part of the young gentlemen who had, instead of favours, stuck, tied on with pack-thread, a pink paper round the top of their hats, with a white paper label, like a physic phial, sticking out from the left side of them; while, instead of flowers, they showered down little paper pellets, or pills, upon 'the happy pair!' Miss Hunter and I were of the party; when we got to the church-door, Glauber Rodolphus, as he handed his bride-elect out of the carriage, said, devoutly turning up his eyes in anticipated resignation: 'I ope as nothink may appen to hinterrupt hour appiness.' 'Pray what should happen to interrupt it, Mr. Perkins?' said Miss James, as tartly as if she had been ten years Mrs. P., and had had time to grow savage and sensible. 'I don't know,' rejoined Glauber Rodolphus, faintly; 'but—but bigamy, Miss James, puts one sometimes hinto greater *transports* than marriage!' 'Bigamy! Mr. Perkins! why what are you thinking of? with your first wife under ground these four

years.' 'Well, well, I ope it may prove so; but one never can tell what may turn up in this world.' 'I should think there was no danger, Mr. Perkins,' said I, 'for did you not attend her in her last illness?' 'No, hI was unfortinately habsent,' said Perkins. 'What a pity, for one never can he sure of anything, unless one does it one'sself;' and with this last damping speech of mine we entered the church; Perkins, I must tell you, looking like a wild cat rabidly in all directions, or like a criminal at the foot of the gibbet expecting a reprieve at the last moment.

"And sure enough scarcely had we reached the altar, before up rushed a demented-looking woman, in a bran new flaxen wig (evidently new on for the occasion) a yellow bonnet, crimson shawl, and blue gown, forcibly seizing Glauber Rodolphus, and calling Miss James all the jades imaginable, 'for to come, for to go, for to think, for to take and tice away her lawful usband; but she'd have the law of her, she would.' Even for Mrs. Perkins, I was surprised at the elegance of her language; but on our return home, Jemima explained the mystery, by telling us that Mr. Perkins, as a forlorn hope, had got up these private theatricals, the play being 'The Jealous Wife,' and that Nanny Nangles, a strapping laundress, the bosom friend of Mrs. Quince, had been prevailed upon, for the sum of two pounds, and the free use of the surgery for herself and her heirs, to personate the injured and reinstated Mrs. Perkins. Miss James, though in strong hysterics

ever since, declares she would rather die than ever let another doctor into Concave House, at which there have been public rejoicings in the school-room; while Miss Omeny has grown very placid and contented, no doubt thinking, that as she *was* to be done out of a husband, it was much better that that ceremony should have taken place quietly in the back drawing-room at Concave House.

"Tibbs brought word to-night, on his return from Hammersmith, that the cook at Seidlitz Lodge told him, that soon after her master's return home, they were afraid he had committed suicide, as they had heard a loud report in Mr. Perkins's bed-room; but upon her, the housemaid, and the boy in buttons that carries out the physic rushing in, Mr. Perkins was discovered quietly putting a bottle of brandy back into the closet, which he always keeps there in case of illness, and handing them an empty soda-water bottle. He told buttons to bring another, and to look sharp, which Tibbs says he always does, being 'the leanest boy between this and Brentford;' and so ends this old play of 'many a slip between the cup and the lip,' as also the letter of—

"Yours sincerely,

"C. SHERWOOD."

I was still laughing over Miss Sherwood's account of Mr. Perkins's execution, and the royal clemency he had arranged for himself, when Nelly returned to say

that my father wished me to put on my things, and go out with him. We went our usual beat up and down the flags opposite St. George's Church, to obtain the little sun there was to be had. We had not taken more than two turns, before who should we see coming down from Hanover Square, from his own house in fact, but Sir Joseph Paulett, with his usual commander-in-chief air, leaning on a flagrantly over-done-looking man of about thirty: all hair and handkerchief, and chained and ringed like a macaw, who appeared by his loud laugh to have just uncorked some rare jest, which he and his companion were quaffing with great *gusto*. From the manner in which he stared at me, it was evident that I had outgrown Don José's recollection; but his companion no sooner approached us, than starting back a step or two, and holding out his hand to my father, he exclaimed:

"Bless my soul! Sedley, is that you? How do, old boy?"

"Ah! how d'y do, my Lord?" said my father, coolly, with a sort of Diogenes' look, that seemed to say, I wish you'd stand out of my sunshine.

"Sedley," cried Don José, "why, surely this is not my little friend, Miriam?"

I certainly had no recollection of the friendship, but I acknowledged my identity by saying:

"Yes. How d'y do, Sir Joseph? How are Lady Paulett and Fiametta?"

Instead of immediately replying to my question

Don José threw himself into a theatrical attitude, and exclaimed:

"Angels were painted in straw hats to look like you."

"Were they?" said I; "I can't say that I ever saw any so pourtrayed, for the *chapeau de paille* is certainly no angel."

"Dosey and Fia are quite well," said he, still staring at me in the rudest manner. "We did not know you were in town, or should have been to see you, though we only arrived ourselves last week. Where are you? You must come to us this evening. Dosey has a few people coming *en petit comité*. My dear, introduce me to your father, will you?"

I did so, and my poor father with difficulty took off his hat, and then said to me aside, while Don José was saying something to his companion, in an undervoice:

"Is that the uncle you are so fond of, Mirry?"

"Oh! good heavens, no," said I, as indignantly as if my poor father had been aware of the bad compliment he was paying to one of the noblest, most generous, and most independent of men, in mistaking him for one of the meanest, the most selfish, and the most worldly.

"Come—dang it! Sedley, it's not fair to keep all the good things to yourself," said Don José's friend: "introduce me to that pretty daughter of yours, will you?"

"Miriam, my dear, Lord ——. 'Pon my word, my Lord, I forget your name," said my father, breaking down in the introduction.

"Miriam, my dear," interposed Don José, with his usual off-hand, manage-everybody-himself sort of manner, "allow me to introduce to you my future son-in-law, and your future cousin, Lord Mountflummery."

"'Pon honour," said the latter, on the strength of our coming cousinship, "I think I am entitled to a shake of that pretty little hand."

"Oh! I have no doubt," rejoined I, not putting out my hand, but bowing very coldly, "that your Lordship will find plenty of people to cozen, without cozening me."

This was very pert, and certainly not in the best taste in the world; yet such a horror have I of that detestable English selfishness, which thinks that no vice ought to be noticed or condemned, unless it has been exercised towards self, that I really fear, were Blue Beard to come to London, and take a house in Carlton Gardens, and give balls and private theatricals every night, I should make myself exclusive and conspicuous, and consequently ridiculous, by not accepting an invitation to them; or were dear Harry the Eighth again seated on the English throne, notwithstanding his having gone a-head in the Reformation—even he might ax (e) me, but I certainly should not go; at

least, as long as I piqued himself upon a vestige of probity, or respectability.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Lord Mountflummery; "you must make Miss Sedley come to-night, Paulett, and then I hope we shall become better friends."

"My dear Mr. Sedley," said Don José, "I shall rely upon your sending Miriam to us this evening early—mind, Mirry, before ten."

"Oh, yes," said my father, "she shall go: thank you for asking her. I'm so glad she's going out at last, for she never goes anywhere, poor child. She's a good girl, a very good girl — aren't you, my Mirry?"

"To be sure, I am, dear Papa," said I, laughing, 'if you say so; and I think it's very likely, for don't you know, they say that good parents have good children?"

My father pressed my wrist as he leant on it, and Don José giving his old "all right" tap to his hind pocket, said, holding out one finger to my father, "I must be down at the Horse-Guards at three, and it now wants a quarter, so *adios*, I suppose there's no use in asking you to come?"

I was struck with the good taste and good feeling of this speech; but as my father did not feel it, or at least did not heed it, I said nothing, and he replied:

"Oh! no, thank you, I am past going out," and the friends walked on; how different from the unvary-

ing delicacy and respect of Monsieur de Maillepré. On our return home we found an invitation to a ball at the French embassy; but the invitation was for Mr. and Miss M. Sedley, for people can always refuse, but it is at least courteous, and well-bred, to give them the option of doing so; and this my father felt, deadened as his perceptions were, for it is a curious physiological fact, that long after the ear is too dull to hear, or the eye to see an unkind word or look, and the heart too numbed to feel them, kindness, like electric fluid, can still penetrate and illumine their density, and their darkness; it is, I suppose, that both are emanations from above.

My father made such a point of my going to the Paulett's that evening, and when I for a long time resisted, he seemed so hurt, as if he thought I would not trust him for one evening alone, and made me so unhappy when he began putting himself on his parole about his conduct during my absence, that I put my arm round his neck and said:

"Pray, dear papa, say no more about it, and I'll go, and bring you back all the news I can pick up, if you are not asleep when I come home."

I had the less scruple in leaving him, that I knew Nelly would take as much care of him as I could, and as Tom Lutron never dined at home now, there was not much to fear. My wardrobe was neither very extensive, nor very *recherché;* but I was at that happy age, when nature does more for one than dress can

do; and as the Indian muslin that was to have figured at Mr. Perkins's, was perfectly clean and snowily white, thanks to Nelly's guardianship and dear, kind Mademoiselle de Guilleragues always took care of the two essential points of dress, that I should be *bien chaussée* and *bien gantée,* by keeping me in a supply of Paris shoes and gloves, I could not err much in my dress, especially as I, (thanks to the same kind *prévenance,*) had also a very nice white *gros de Naples* slip to put under my dress, and a plain gold comb for my hair; but even had I none of these things, one has always plenty of ambulating rag-bags, or over-dressed twelfth-cake queens, to keep one in countenance in England, even among the *haute volée;* at all events, when I completed my toilet by placing the two moss-rosebuds in my bosom, for *bouquetology* was not yet invented; had Victorine herself (the then autocrat of Parisian fashions) turned me out, Nelly could not have been more satisfied; for she declared that she did not think "the blessed Vargin herself cud have a purtier dress," to which I modestly replied; "Why you see the fashions are different now, Nelly."

I went down to kiss my father before I went.

"Poor child," said he returning my kiss, and looking after me as I left the room, "you are very like your mother. Heaven send you better luck!"

But even then I wished for the same, that I might be soon in Heaven. The going to the Pauletts was to me anything but pleasure, for I have a superstitious

dread of—not exactly of the evil eye, but certainly of the evil influence, of being with persons who don't like you, and whom you know to be hollow to you, and consequently whom you don't like; however, if one only herded with the staunch, the true, the sympathetic, and the amiable, I'm afraid one's intercourse with society would soon be reduced to an occasional and rare *tête-à-tête*. So girding on my armour like a social Gideon, as I ascended Lady Paulett's staircase, I determined to do battle bravely with the annoyances of the evening whatever they might be, at all events; at the onset it was a pleasure to traverse three large and lofty rooms, hung with fine pictures, and brilliantly lit with those fairy-like rays, "made by the bee, from the lily and the rose," as some one prettily describes wax-lights, and to exhale that soft perfumed atmosphere upon which seems to float the harmony of gentle thoughts; for there is a sort of high-dried vulgarity about a London lodging-house, which in time smokes one down to the platitude of a red-herring, with, however, the *salt* left out; and thanks to my late *séjour* in Maddox Street, feeling exceedingly like this peculiar species of flat fish, I entered Lady Paulett's drawing-room.

I had come early as I had been desired: it wanted a few minutes of ten, the men had not yet left the dining-room, which accounted for the solemn silence that prevailed, though there was a goodly crowd of petticoats of all ages; since the world began, or at least since the time of Mrs. and the Miss Noahs there

has been a joke, which from running all over the world has at length rolled itself into a proverb about female garrulity—ah! I only wish mankind in general and Englishmen in particular, could see a party of "British females" (for this dumbness at this hour is peculiar to them) ruminating after dinner; but they can't, and as their arrival from the dining-room always breaks the spell, of course, they don't believe it any more than if it was a thing that had been stated in a letter from a Cabinet Minister, M. Cahagnet's celestial telegraph, or a puff in a county paper.

Divers youthful forms were in a half-reclining attitude upon the settees and divans round the room, looking overpowered either with sleep or spleen; but raising their eyes when I entered with such a stare of scrutiny and discontent, that I began to be afraid that I had in some mysterious and unaccountable manner personally injured, outraged, or at least offended them all. Into the *bergères* and *causeuses* were stuffed various awful specimens of the ancient "British females," painted almost like the ancient Britons, and looking perfectly rabid with rouge and false ringlets, while some of them, from their austere and forbidding countenances, forcibly reminded one of Evelyn's description of the severe winter of 1658, wherein he says, that "the crows' feet were frozen to their prey;" for could I have spared any pity from myself, I should most unquestionably have pitied the poor crows' feet and wrinkles that were frozen into

those awful faces. In a *fauteuil* near a window, throned the great personage of the evening—the grand dowager of the assemblage: this I concluded from the anxious and deferential attention that Lady Paulett was bestowing upon her; nor was I mistaken, as I afterwards was introduced to her and found that she was the Dowager-Duchess of Clapperclaw, so celebrated for her management of hemews and husbands, as she had by a scientific process of galvanized vapour prolonged the days of three of the former, while by an equally scientific system of counter-irritation shehad shortened those of two of the latter.

Near her, on a stool in the window, sat a poor little pale-faced boy, reading, his elbows on his knees, and his shoulders up to his ears. This was little Lord Catagraph, her eldest daughter's eldest son. At a respectful distance from him was a pretty, mild, lady-like, but intelligent-looking young person. Poor thing! she was the nursery-governess, and always was taken out as a part of the paraphernalia of little Lord Catagraph, to carry his hat and gloves, or even any stray idea he might chance to pick up while he was out, lest, not being used to it, it might fatigue him to carry it home in his own head. No sooner had the groom of the chambers announced my name to Lady Paulett, than, actually quitting her devotional attitude before the Duchess of Clapperclaw, she came half-way to meet me, shook me kindly by the hand, and told me I was so much grown, that she should not have known me, and then putting her head into the door-way of a little boudoir, called Fiametta, who came, looking exceedingly pretty, but over flushed, as if with forced spirits, and an unquiet drooping of the eyelids, which seemed to bear witness that they did not always laugh.

"Fia, here's Miriam," said her mother: "now should you have known her?"

"Oh! how d'y do, dear?" said the former, so coldly

that the kiss that followed her words seemed more like part of the ceremony of a mock pageant than anything real. "And how is Grace? and how are the Antidotes?" added she, showing her very fine teeth, with what would have been a smile, but that there was not a gleam of joy in it.

I then congratulated her upon her marriage, which was to take place at the end of the month.

"*Il y a bien de quoi,*" replied she, with an angry flush: and then, suddenly turning pale, said: "I must go back to Lady Sarah Clive," with which she left me.

As Lady Paulett had again been applied to the Dowager Duchess, I looked round to see if there was a vacant seat near the pretty-looking governess, for she had a round, dimpled face, and good humour seemed to lurk in every dimple, which I thought would be an excellent altrative, to the formidable Roman noses, thin, sharp faces, bony necks, and scraggy elbows ranged round the room, like a human *chevaux de frise*. But, alas! there was no vacant seat near her, as she was in the corner, close to the boudoir-door, behind Her Grace of Clapperclaw, so I was fain to take up my position on a small ottoman on the other side of little Lord Catagraph, and behave myself, that is, not speak, till I was spoken to; but, unfortunately, bad habits are not easily laid aside, and I had not been seated five minutes before Lord Catagraph, looking up from his book, and despairingly round the room, like Orpheus looking for Euridice, burst into the following interrogatory soliloquy:

"What is a weeping birch?"

"A birch rod," said I.

"Oh!—and do they grow?"

"Yes—like the Prince Regent."

"How like the Prince Regent?"

"More unpopular every day."

"Oh!—"

The poor governess, though I am sure she had loads of dimples to put it in, seemed terribly distressed as to how on earth she should hide her laughter; while the Duchess of Clapperclaw, making a sort of Archimedes screw of her right hand on the arm of the chair, lifted up her ponderous weight sufficiently to turn slowly round, and bring the battery of her heavy eyebrows and fierce eyes full upon me; till every moment I expected to hear the report of those pistol eyes going off, and to see my brains bespattering little Lord Catagraph; but nothing of the kind occurred, and after the Duchess of Clapperclaw had taken sufficient observations, she said, avoiding the ill breeding of a whisper, and quite loud enough for me to hear—

"Who is that?"

"A cousin of Sir Joseph's," said Lady Paulett.

"Well, hasn't she a name?" growled the Dowager, addressing Lady Paulett, but still staring me full in the face.

"Oh, yes, Miss Sedley."

"Introduce her to me—pretty girl—ask her to my ball."

"Miriam," said Lady Paulett, nodding to me to come to her, which I did: "I want to introduce you to the Duchess of Clapperclaw."

I bowed; the Duchess heaved in her chair and said—

"Fond of dancing?" but whether as a profession of her *own* opinions, or an inquiry into mine, I was left in doubt; but taking it for granted that it was the latter, I replied—

"Oh, very."

"Have a ball on the 15th of May, shall be happy to see you," boomed the same deep sepulchral voice.

"Thank your Grace, but I scarcely think I shall be

in town, as I am sorry to say poor papa is a great invalid."

"Never mind, you *must* come. I pique myself upon having more beauty at my balls than any one in London. Where are you, eh? that I may call."

Not then being as well acquainted with the London world as I was after, I'm not sure that it was all shame and intuition of how I should lose caste, in the estimation of thirty thousand a year, if thirty thousand a year came to see me at a shabby lodging in Maddox Street, no matter had I been the Three Graces, Nine Muses, and cardinal virtues concentrated into one great perfection; but I could not bear the idea of strangers seeing my father, or of keeping him out of the way that I might see them; so recollecting that Monsieur de Maillepré had half arranged a party to Richmond for the next day but one, and being neither a heroine of romance nor a saint, and consequently not a piece of unerring perfection, upon this slight foundation I boldly built this florid excuse.

"You are very good, but I leave town the day after to-morrow."

Where are you going to, eh?"

"Richmond," faltered I, fairly caught (as people generally are) in my own trap.

"Oh! ah! Richmond, in Yorkshire."

Heaven forgive me, I made no answer; and it implied the falsehood I did not utter.

"Sedley, Sedley, what have I heard about Sedley, and beautiful dancing. Oh, yes! I recollect the Margravine of Anspach told me long ago she was on a visit to my old friend Sir George Paulett, and that a little niece of his danced some odd dance so beautifully. Was it any relation of yours, eh?"

"I'm afraid it was me," said I smiling.

"And what was the name of the dance? for I never could remember it."

"The Cracovienne."

"I wish you'd dance it for me now."

I, with some difficulty assured this rather too *exigeante* lady, that not being an opera-dancer I was not in the habit of making such public exhibitions, though I had done so once when I was quite a child.

"But Fia Paulett dances all her Spanish dances for me whenever I ask her, before any one and every one."

"Well, that only proves that she is more obliging than I am." Here a sudden and electric rustling of silks, fluttering of fans, and hum of voices—not unlike the sudden uprousing of an aviary when one goes into it of a night with a light, or the flapping of the wings of the glums and glowries in Peter Wilkins. I looked round, and perceived that every statue was animated, that every frown was changed into a smile, that the dumb spoke! and the blind saw! in short, that every Roman nose had found a countryman; *vulgo*, the gentlemen were gradually coming up from dinner. How wretched every poor Turkish Ambassador must feel in this country, that is, if he is a pious Musselman and a loyal subject, to think how comparatively little *his* master the Sultan is made of, by his Odalesques to what every English squire, with anything like a rental, is by "*British females.*" One of the very first of the national idols that entered the room was Philip Vavasour. He gave a slight start at seeing me; but his face was radiant as he walked up to me; but seeing the Clapperclaw telescopes upon us, he bowed very respectfully, and said—

"I did myself the honour of calling upon Mr. Sedley this morning, Miss Sedley, and am sorry I was not fortunate enough to find either of you at home."

"That is generally the fate of morning visits," said I.

"Not *always*," he replied, pointedly; and as an

ugly rakish-looking young man, with hay-coloured hair and evaporated-looking eyes, who seemed to have taken rather too much wine, now came up to speak to the Duchess, I retreated nearer the window and said—

"Thank you so much for these lovely moss rose-buds; it was so good of you to bring them to me."

"Not good to give what one does not value. But now, indeed," added he, in a low voice, "I should value it if you would give me one; will you? Oh *do*, Miriam, *dear* Miriam."

Never before had he called me Miriam. I felt that my cheeks were redder than the flowers, and more in a crisis of nervous trepidation than as a free-will offering, I took one of the buds out of my bosom and gave it to him, trembling as if I had committed some dreadful crime, and feeling almost as frightened, I timidly raised my eyes, and standing in the door way I saw Fiametta, who flung at us, like a curse, one withering glance of mingled hatred and vengeance. Philip saw it, too, and walked away; the room seemed to go round with me. I felt cold and faint. The next minute I heard her reply to a question, that a gentleman with the star and ribbon of the Garter asked her, I suppose, about me, as she looked at me all the time: she answered him in the most insulting manner: "Oh, only a poor relation of papa's!"

I was no longer cold; the blood actually seemed to boil in my ears and cheeks. I turned round and said to her:

"I assure you, Fiametta, I do not ambition the honour of even being Sir Joseph Paulett's *poor* relation, as among our quarterings, such as they are, we certainly can't boast those of the Signora Fiametta, who figured at the Italian Opera about the third quarter of the last century."

I had now rivetted the hatred that had before been

so gratuitously bestowed upon me. Fiametta cast upon me one deadly look as she turned away without a word, and walked into the other room.

"Excuse me, my dear Miss Sedley," said the Duchess of Clapperclaw, holding her fan before her face as if much shocked, for English sympathy and support generally flows in an inverse ratio for the aggressor, and never for the injured; especially if they have such *manque de convenance* as to openly resent the injury, instead of resorting to the quiet and orthodox back-stabbing mode of retaliation, for the laws of society are the very antipodes of the game laws, and demand that all prey should be snared, as they grant no license for open warfare. "For," continued her Grace, "we all know Sir Joseph Paulett's origin, but he makes himself very useful, and therefore very popular; and depend upon it you will get the worst of it if you attack him."

"I don't want to attack him," said I; "but I think it was a piece of wanton cruelty and ill-breeding, especially in her own house, to make the coarse and unlady-like speech about me which she did just now in my hearing."

"But, my dear Miss Sedley, only think what you said to her."

"But I did not say it in *attack*, I said it in *retaliation*," persisted I.

"In—ah—that is a—I'm sure I think Miss Sedley was quite right. Ah—it wa—was confoundedly insolent in Fia Paulett. Duchess, pray present me," said the young gentleman with hay-coloured hair and evaporated eyes.

"Miss Sedley, my step-son, the Duke of Clapperclaw."

Our bows exchanged, he began, in the true national style—for most Englishmen's only idea of a compliment is to detract from some other woman *to* the

woman to whom they are speaking; but this no doubt arises from a thorough knowledge of their countrywomen, who, to do them justice, with very few exceptions, are the most envious and ill-natured in the world.

"Don't you think Fia Paulett deucedly gone off?" said he (for I'm sorry to say all the men called her Fia, and in return she made equally free with their Christian and surnames, always dispensing with the Mr., Lord, or Sir, as the case might be; and if there is one thing more degrading than another, in my old-fashioned opinion, it is to hear what *should* be a respectable girl talked of by every man as Georgy this, and Cicy that, like a race-horse, or an opera-dancer).

"No," said I; "I think she is quite as pretty as ever, and looking remarkably well to-night."

"Well a—come—a—that's devilish good of you."

"My sight *is* very good, and *there* the sole goodness lies, as it cannot detect faults where only beauty exists."

"I declare, C——," said my hay-coloured companion, turning to the high-bred looking man with the ribbon of the Garter, who had elicited Fiametta's speech about me, "that is a compliment quite in your way, for you have the knack of them; but 'pon my soul it was far more than Fia deserved, from the quarter it came."

"I can only say, Amen," replied Lord C——; "and never was so grateful for the correctness of my own vision as at the present moment. Miss Sedley," continued he, making me a very graceful bow, "I have some claim upon your indulgence for presenting myself to you; for I had the pleasure a few months ago of being the bearer of a packet to you from your sister, which I should have done myself the honour of conveying to you in person, but that I had to leave town for Vienna the very night of my arrival."

I thanked him for having so kindly troubled himself with so large a packet, but felt infinitely more grateful to him when he praised Grace, even to *my* heart's content, and then added: "As for de Maillepré, he's charming! I don't know a better fellow anywhere. His is one of those complete, nicely-balanced, and finely-blended characters in which there are no vacuums—a bright intelligence, in fact, of many constellations, without any misty nebulæ in the way of drawbacks; so that I think your sister has every chance of happiness; but," added he, with a smile, "there are other heroes of romance in the world, and I must not forget them. Allow me to ask how fare the loves of Glauber Rodolphus?"

"Oh!" laughed I, "they fare well, or rather have farewelled!" and I then gave him a full account of Mr. Perkins's capture and rescue, at which we were still laughing, when who should come up to speak to the Duchess of Clapperclaw but Lord Frederick Farnham. When he had reported himself to her as forthcoming for her ball on the 15th of May, I touched his arm with my fan, and putting out my hand, said:

"Naughty Lord Frederick! you forget your old plague! ungrateful Lord Frederick! not to remember the charitable mortal who came to your assistance the last (and I hope the first) time you showed the white feather, even of your aide-de-camp's hat, and fainted getting out of the carriage at the Palazzo Vascello, or as you profanely called it, the 'Old Ship!'"

"My dear Miss Miriam!" cried he, shaking both my hands, "I am so delighted to see you; how is your sister, how is Sir George, and how are Mrs. Marley and Miss Paulett? for I need not ask how you are."

"All well, thank you, except dear Uncle Paulett, who will be in town at last, I hope next month, but who is

now in Paris, to have a cataract taken off of one of his eyes, by Müller, the great German oculist."

"In Paris! how came I to miss him there? for I only returned from Paris yesterday."

"Why, he was not to reach Paris till last Monday. But tell me, did you see anything of Mademoiselle de Guilleragues?"

"A great deal of her; and she is so happy! *hérissée de la vielle cour*, as she says herself; and every one so fond of her. As for the *Abbaye au Bois, she* is, with the Chateaubriand, and Gerard's picture of Corinne, at Cape Mecinas, and the blue *fauteuils*, part of the furniture; and Madame Récamier would not know herself without each and all of them. I must tell you a *mot* of hers, *qui faisait fureur à Paris*, for you know how *spirituelle* she is. One night Chateaubriand was staring at her, intently for which he apologized, by saying that she reminded him so strongly of a long lost friend. 'No apology, Monsieur,' said she, answering him in his own words, 'Il y a une vertu dans le regard d'un grand homme, et d'ailleurs vous avez dit aussi, que la meilleure partie du génie se compose de souvenirs.'"

"In bowing to these two charming and delicate compliments, Chateaubriand knocked down from a little *déjeûner* of four, an exquisite jewelled *Sévre* cup, and shivered it to atoms.

"'Never mind, it can't be helped,' said Madame Récamier, picking it up with a very rueful countenance, which she tried to cover with her peculiarly sweet smile.

"'Ah!' said Mademoiselle de Guilleragues, turning to Chateaubriand, 'On voit bien, Monsieur, que Madame n'est pas '*Atala*,' car elle ne met pas son bonheur en *chaque tasse!*' (*chactas*)."

"Wasn't it neat?" said Lord Frederick.

"Charming!" said I, "only she and dear Uncle Pau-

lett, between their goodness, their sparkling and racy wit, and their perfect manners, spoil one for all the rest of the world, for one meets none like them."

"If we did, we should not value them so much," said Lord Frederick.

"I must not forget that '*chactas*' for De Maillepré," said Lord C——, "for it is the very best thing I have heard for a long time; sufficiently good to make the shades of Voltaire and Monsieur de Bièvre fight a duel, when its echoes reach the elysian fields, for neither the one, nor the other ever said anything better."

I perceived that Philip Vavasour was leaning against the opposite wall of the room, looking at me with a strange mixture of conflicting expressions in his face; but his eyes looked so fearfully handsome, and more than usually luminous, that I knew by those two infallible symptoms with him, that the demon, either of pride or jealousy, was at work. I looked at him, as much as to say, "Why then don't you come over, and join in our conversation?" But he turned away, I cannot exactly call it haughtily, for it was more with the pout of a spoilt child, and walked into the next room. Fiametta then sat down to the piano, at Lord Mountflummery's request; and after running over the keys, said to him, with an hysterical kind of laugh, loud enough for every one to hear:

"Is it to be an appropriate song?"

"Oh! to be sure," said he, "the more appropriate the better."

Whereupon she sang with the most pointed emphasis *at* him, which, thanks to his ignorance of Italian, did not penetrate, but told with most of those present.

"Ah! che Bruto Marito, per une Gentilezza Ragazza!"

"No, no! not that horrid thing!" cried Lady Paulett, trying to stop her: but in vain, for she would

not commute a single inuendo, but sang it out to the very last note.

Another young lady then sat down and "lifted up her voice," but whether it was English, Italian, French, German, or high Dutch, it was utterly impossible to ascertain, as she had one of those peculiarly English unpronouncing voices, which gave one the idea of her throat being lined with fleecy hosiery, and her mouth filled with pap.

"I forget, Miriam, whether you sing," said Lady Paulett, coming up to me.

"Sometimes."

"Pray let us have the *felicity* of hearing you," said Fiametta, with the same insufferably impertinent smile, that years before she had said "*you* going to dance, Mirry!"

And I fear I answered her now much in the same spirit, that I did *not* answer her then, as I very quietly said,

"Certainly, if you wish it;" and walked over to the instrument.

"Dear me," said she, as I tried a slight prelude, "I had no idea that you were that sort of player."

"What sort of player?"

"Why, scattering round brilliant harmonies along the keys, as carelessly as a husbandman scatters seed," said a well-known voice at my elbow. I turned to shake hands with Monsieur de Maillepré.

"How on earth did you know Monsieur de Maillepré?" said Fiametta.

"In a very ordinary and common-place manner," said I with a smile. "he will soon be my brother-in-law!"

"Grace going to marry Monsieur de Maillepré! one of the best *parties* in France, impossible!"

"J'espère bien que non, Mademoiselle," said he,

making her a profound bow, in answer to her well-bred speech; she now looked so thoroughly disconcerted that even I pitied her; and to cover her retreat, began "Voi che sapete"—but others were not so kind to her, for when I ceased there was a round of what I could not but think, as far as poor Fiametta was concerned, very cruel applause, which Lord C. added to by maliciously turning to her and saying

"At all events, the *poor* relation has a very *rich* voice; don't you think so, Miss Paulett?"

"Eh? poor relation—what's all this about?" said Sir Joseph, who generally poked his crooked nose into every *embarras*.

Lord C. still more maliciously gave him the desired explanation, affecting to think it a witty conceit of Fiametta's; but the father knew the child of his own training better, and dragging her away, said with an angry frown as they passed by me—

"You *are* so imprudent! Fia; that's not the way to humiliate the girl."

What more good advice and wise reproof he gave her I know not, for it was lost in air and distance; and I being again importuned to sing, had nothing to do but to obey, and sang that then comparatively new song of Moore's—

> "When first I met thee, warm and young,
> There shone such truth about thee,
> And on thy lip such promise hung,
> I did not dare to doubt thee."

When I ceased, Philip Vavasour was at my side.

"I never heard you sing so well, and that is saying a great deal," said he in a low voice. I was happy at that moment, and that always makes one look radiant; yet, still, as I raised my eyes to his, he looked too triumphant to satisfy the oneness of feeling that was

in my own heart; like the night of my childish triumph at the little theatre of ——, it seemed that his particular praise was only the echo of the general applause, and that had it been censure or silence instead, his pride would also have been displeased and silent. There is some French author who says that the *hoc erat in votis* will be the perpetual nightmare of all our illusions. True, true! still I was so happy, that I did not want anything to come after, so I said to him—

"Will you have the goodness to see whether the carriage is there?" and not waiting for his return, I wished Lady Paulett good night.

"Running away so soon," said she; "well I shall come and see you on our return; but we are going into Derbyshire the day after to-morrow for six weeks, and then you will tell me all about how you came to be with your father?"

I thought it was time for her to ask, yet still I would rather she had not done so at all. The Duchess of Clapperclaw again heaved in her chair, and said—

"Mind you come and see me when you return to town. I like your singing prodigiously; hear every note; expression in singing, what proper emphases are in reading. English girls in general sing like machines; rather hear a barrel-organ any day; does grind the right tune at all events. Good night; happy to have met you; dance for me some day, I know, when we're alone."

"To a barrel-organ like a monkey," thought I, as I curtsied my adieux.

"Good night," cried little Lord Catagraph, starting up, and putting out his poor little emaciated hand; "but I don't now quite understand what a weeping birch is."

"Why, I'm afraid it must be seen and felt before it can be understood; but I'm sure you are too good a

boy to require a more intimate acquaintance with birch."

"Am I, Miss Grey?" asked he, appealing to the pretty governess.

"Sometimes; no one is always good."

"Aint they? then what's the use of your being always with me?"

"I'm sure I don't very well know," said poor Miss Grey, who no doubt had often before propounded the same question to herself, without being able to obtain a solution of it; but as she had stood up at my approach, I now begged she would sit down, shook hands with her, and wished her good night. Monsieur de Maillepré was about to offer me his arm; but seeing Mr. Philip Vavasour advancing up the second room, he said, with that tact which few Frenchmen are without—

"I was going to offer my services; but as here is a more worthy cavalier, I will resign in his favour, as I promised to sing a duet with Miss Paulett."

Philip pressed my arm lightly to his side all the way down stairs, and I felt his heart beating tumultuously; but he said nothing, till he put me into the carriage, when he said, in a low concentrated voice, as he pressed my hand in his—

"Miriam, you *must* let me see you to-morrow."

The word *must* jarred disagreeably on my ear; I should have preferred *do*. To say the least of it, it was somewhat too soon for such candid tyranny; but in slamming to, the carriage door, the *must* seemed pulverized; and as I looked at the graceful figure, and saw the beautiful face of him who had uttered it gazing at the carriage till it turned the corner, I'm afraid I forgot the *word*, and only remembered the *look!*

CHAPTER XI.

The morning after I had been at the Pauletts', my poor father had had such a bad night that he begged to be left, that he might try and sleep, so that I should be (as I thought) alone to receive Philip if he came. I had a sort of fever on the spirits that would neither allow me to read, write, work, nor sit still; I could do nothing but walk up and down—I don't know that I was exactly happy; no, I could not have been so; for real happiness is a satisfied feeling, and all satisfied feelings are calm. The conflict is excitement, but after the victory comes peace! Whatever it was, like the shadowy beatitudes of an opium elysium, I would not then have exchanged it for the wisest of realities, though like Manfred, I might have invoked Philosophy!

> "If that I did not know philosophy
> To be of all our vanities the motliest,
> The merest word that ever fool'd the ear
> From out the schoolman's jargon."

I opened the Bible. It is a strange, mysterious fact, that one scarcely ever does so at random, let one's sorrow, or one's perplexity, or even one's joy, which is more rare, be of what nature it will, but the verse one's eye falls upon seems the exact index of our own individual position, it would almost make one think

that one's guardian angel invisibly turns the leaves; at all events the one now before me was:

"And Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her."

And I wondered if Philip Vavasour would serve seven years for the love he had for me? Seven years! those were in the old patriarchal times, when men's lives were of a patriarchal length. What man's love lasts seven years now? unless, indeed, it be his self-love. Besides, how did I know that he loved me at all? He certainly had called me "dear Miriam" the night before, but that, perhaps, was only impertinence from my being alone and having no mother, and almost no father; if so, instead of being glad, I ought to have resented it. He also had said very authoritatively that "I must" see him to-day. That *was* impertinent, and still I had not resented it. Decidedly there was something wrong somewhere. While I was still pondering on these things, I was startled by a sharp knock at the hall door. I knew it was not Philip Vavasour's knock; and I had my hand on the bell, to tell Maurice that I could not see any stranger, when unannounced, who should walk into the room but Sir Joseph Paulett. In every house he infested he was generally as welcome as the tax-gatherer; but at this particular moment he actually seemed to me a sort of imbodied income-tax, his nose making the likeness to that crooked measure still stronger. After placing his hat, cane, and gloves on the table, with that perfect *chez soi* air which he always diffused about himself in every house that was *not* his own, he advanced towards me; and instead of shaking hands, which was the very extreme of any outward and visible cloak of dislike that had ever existed between us, he seized me by both elbows, and was about to brand me with a kiss! I drew back indignantly, and said:

"Really, Sir Joseph, as you never even took the liberty of kissing me when I was a child, I beg you will not make so strange a mistake as to do so now."

"Ahem! ahem!" said he, lifting up the skirts of his coat and flinging himself into a chair, pocketing the rebuff as coolly as if it had been his handkerchief; for rebuffs are nothing when one's used to them—"the fact is, I came to speak to you on a matter of business. Fia tells me that Grace is going to marry Monsieur de Maillepré, devilish good match for her, one of the best *parties* in France. Now, my dear, your father, being evidently in no state to look after settlements, and all that sort of thing, I shall be very happy to act as her father on this occasion, and also to give her away."

"Thank you," said I, suddenly falling three degrees below zero, "but you seem to forget that though my poor father's health is now, unfortunately, so enfeebled, yet dear Uncle Paulett, who has been more than a father to us all our lives, will certainly not desert us now; and I am very sure, that sincerely as Grace is attached to Monsieur de Maillepré, she would rather not marry him, than that any one but Uncle Paulett should give her away."

"Oh! well, that is all very well about the giving away; but with regard to the settlements, your uncle not being here, I am willing to see that they are all properly arranged, and that De Maillepré don't take advantage of her being I may say, an orphan."

A slight flush at this speech I could not repress, but I said calmly: "Thank you, but Grace's being penniless, will considerably simplify the settlements, and I have too good an opinion of Monsieur de Maillepré's honesty, (for I hate the word honour, so long as it has been used as a mask for every villainy among *soi-disant* gentlemen!) that I am very certain, his first care will be to make every provision for the woman who is to

share his name, and therefore ought to share his fortunes; but above all, for the woman who may be the mother of his children; but even should he from any over-sight, (for I am very sure it would not be from any worse fault,) omit to do so. The *Code Napoléon* differs widely from the English Nab-code; the first making every provision for the protection and redress of women, and the latter affording only every facility for defrauding them, and every impunity for ill-treating them."

"Oh! well, have it your own way; I wash my hands of it," said Don José, hastily buttoning up his surtout to the throat, giving the padding on his chest a couple of taps, and reaching over for his gloves, preparatory to his taking his departure; "all I know is, that I'm devilish glad I broke off that foolish affair between Fia and Philip Vavasour, for I saw Barnavelt, Dingly Vavasour's solicitor yesterday, and he tells me his affairs are in a very ticklish state."

I thought if they were in no more danger than Fiametta had been of marrying his nephew, they did not run any great risk; still, I felt an uncomfortable feel on Philip's account, for I already knew him too well not to be aware that the loss of fortune and station would be to him the loss of happiness, while, on the other hand, I was attacked with that peculiar species of imbecility, then rife among young ladies in their teens, but which in these wiser and more advanced times is happily as completely exploded as the ravages of the small pox; I mean those verdant hallucinations about living upon love, music, moonlight, and other light food, for people were primitive and plebeian in their ideas then, and all they aspired to was, to realize the vulgar saying of having enough "to make the pot boil;" but in these more refined times, every young lady emulating every young gentleman, has a much more extensive (kitchen) range of ideas, in which

each separate stewpan requires to be well *tinned,* or else love runs the risk of being poisoned, or of dying of an indigestion of that terrible fungus, called marriage!

Don José having arranged the curl on his forehead, put on his hat in servile imitation of his nose, considerably on one side, drawn on his gloves, and given a last look at himself in the glass, to see that he was properly packed, extended one finger towards me, and announced his departure for Clapperclaw House, where he kindly looked in every day at luncheon-time, and arranged the programme of the wines for the day, and the dinners for the week, and delicately hinted at the best modes of investing superfluous sums, which must have been particularly edifying to the young duke, who was still a minor, and to little Lord Catagraph, as an embryo chancellor of the exchequer. In short, Don José's great talents were only fit for great people, they were too stupendous and *all-grasping* for the humbler walks of domestic life; and as for private and personal matters, he never meddled with them, but like some mischievous urchin out of bounds, and fancying himself "Monarch of all he surveyed," he would be sure to fling stones into the stagnant pond of one's disagreeable associations. Mine he had so completely stirred up, that he was no sooner gone, than I burst into tears. Five minutes after, Philip Vavasour arrived.

"Good heavens!" said he, taking my hand as soon as Maurice had closed the door, "what is the matter?"

"Nothing," said I, drying my eyes, and smiling through my tears, "only I have been honoured with a visit from Sir Joseph Paulett this morning, and he has the happy knack of invariably treading upon the gouty feet of all one's annoyances."

"Miriam," cried he, flinging himself at my feet, "give me this little hand, and no one shall ever annoy you, at least not with impunity."

"But this little hand is empty," I said, shaking my head mournfully, "and when that is the case, insult always finds room to discharge her quiver."

"Answer me, Miriam—have I deceived myself? for it sometimes happens, that one mistakes the echoes of one's own heart for the beatings of another; but do you love me? or can you love me?" and as he spoke, he grasped my hands so tightly, and looked into my eyes with a sort of magnetic omnipotence, that seemed to uproot my very soul.

"Philip, you frighten me," said I, faintly, clinging to the arm of the sofa, against which we were standing.

"I frighten you! My God! and that is your only return for so much love!" said he, bitterly, suddenly relaxing his grasp of my hands, as he turned to the chimney-piece, and leaning both his elbows on it, buried his face in his hands.

"You think you love me, perhaps," said I, timidly, "but you know but little of me yet; and it is dangerous to fancy that we love those we don't know, lest, when we do know them, we should, too late, execrate our own idolatry, and be the first to trample in the dust the false divinity we had set up; finding, like the Athenians, that the chief altar in our hearts was still awaiting the Unknown God!"

"Oh, Miriam! you talk of love with a cold, calm heart at ease, as if it were a geometrical puzzle, to be sought, and studied, and pondered over, till every curious zigzag could be dove-tailed into suitable affinities, upon scientific principles; but it is not that—oh! no, it is not that—but the only spark of sacred fire which our dull weight of human clay can neither dim nor extinguish. Miriam," continued he, passionately, again kneeling before me, and taking my hands in his, as he looked with tearful eyes into my face, "I don't even ask you to love me—only let me love you."

"I see," said I, trying to smile, for I was very near making a fool of myself, and telling him that he need not beg me to do what I had already done, "you only want to bring this spark of sacred fire, which you say is burning so brightly in your heart, and, like an incendiary, light up mine with it, till there is no distinguishing our respective property in this general conflagration."

"Yes, yes—that is what I want; and the sooner it is done the better," said he, flinging his arms round me, and pressing me to his heart.

"Philip," said I, as soon as I could disengage myself from him, "sit down beside me, and let us talk rationally, if possible. I hate affectation; and after allowing you to kiss me, I'm not going to calumniate myself by not owning that I love you; but—"

"Ah! that horrid, marble word! it makes even your mouth ugly, I must kiss it off."

"And you must listen to the charmer, charm she never so wisely. When I say that I love you, I should rather say that I could love you, deeply, devotedly—perhaps even as madly as you would like, if your moral qualities gave me warrant for so doing; but I frankly tell you, that mine is a high, and therefore a very unworldly standard, and it would not be in my nature to love what fell far short of it; for, young as I am, I build no castles in the air—esteem Christian, not conventional esteem, is the only rock upon which I could ever build my love, since I require a fragment of this rock even to found my friendship upon; and, recollect, love with us is not the hot spark it is with men, as ready to fall on one object as on another; but it is either the rock a-head on which we founder, in life's stormy sea, or else the bright beacon, on that rock, to guide us safely through all danger. The aromatic pine and the fragrant myrtle, which Love lights up upon the heights of his own southern latitudes, shed a far

wider and intenser, but more transient blaze; but Principle is the only naptha whose steady light may be depended upon, through storm and calm, as the permanent pharos of a whole life."

"Then you think me thoroughly worthless and unprincipled!" interrupted he, more with the flash of wounded pride than the sorrow of wounded affection.

"Scarcely, when I have told you how well I could love you, and yet on what my love depended; but, I should like to be sure that you possessed those qualities before I ran so fearful a risk, as the happiness of my whole life, for it is not as if men ever tried even to rescue a raft from what they have wrecked; but no, like children of a smaller growth the toy once broken becomes worthless in their eyes—'the world' is still 'all before them where to choose;' but a woman has no world beyond her own home, and when hymen dashes about the household gods in any of his conjugal whirlwinds, he takes care to pulverise the wife's heart well first—to break their fall, so that the husbands share of them may not be so much mutilated but what they can be very easily put together again."

"Ah! this is my mother's doing. I see how completely she has poisoned you against me."

"Oh! Philip, Philip! that speech shows how little you know your mother; but be just, recollect what your father was and what your mother is, and you will not wonder that I should look before I leap. I make every allowance for your way of viewing this vital subject, all your life unnaturally estranged from that mother, and educated at an English public school where the heavy stone of ridicule and selfishness is rolled over the well of natural affections that is to be found more or less deep in every heart, and where the phosphoric light of intellect is alone tended; while the real lamp of life, the *moral qualities,* are either totally neglected, or worse still, utterly perverted by being taught

to think that vice is not only a pardonable weakness, but an orthodox necessity in men, and when punished should only be so in the other sex—just as there are always scapegoats to receive his floggings when the little Lamra of Thibet commits any heinous offence. It is true, that that old fashioned code, the laws of God, enjoin to men certain duties towards their wives, and the marriage ceremony goes through the pleasant farce of repeating these; but as our every law, especially those relative to the English slave-trade of women, is framed by and for mammon; there is nothing for an outraged wife but to sit like Marius amid the ruins of her own heart, only woe betide her if, when lacerated beneath their crash, the cry of her languish penetrates beyond the sphere of her destruction.

"Philip, every law respecting marriage, as it now exists, is wrong, rotten, and monstrous, and every woman of principle, before she submits to be branded for life at the matrimonial gallies, and have her chains locked on, should look well to the character of the man with whom she is to be coupled; for in him *individually* must be her only hope, as let her ill treatment be of ever so black and barbaric a dye, neither the laws of our much boasted constitution, nor the equally dry-rotted laws of society, afford her the slightest protection or redress. And I have a notion that the man who is not a good son cannot be a good husband, or indeed good in any relationship of life. The greatest monster I ever heard of, was one, who, to the world, passed for a paragon, because he spent his life in servilely flattering a rich and vicious old mother, who had an unentailed estate, till he won the prize, and to continue this charming farce of filial affection (for he was fond of theatricals,) he told eulogistic lies in marble of her after she had gone to her fearful account. But I don't mean dramatic effects, or political forms and ceremonies, I mean a son whose love for his mother should be

'spread out over his heart like a vesture,' to borrow the beautiful language of Scripture, which so describes God as spreading out the heavens—and next to that heaven, believe me, Philip, there is none to which a man can look up to more wisely, or more blessedly, than to that of a mother's love."

"Miriam," said he, leaning his face against mine, while I felt his hot tears on my cheek; "do you remember once, when you were a child, and I was scarcely more, your asking me to let you help me to love my mother? oh! help me to do so now, and I will be all and everything you wish—you have my heart and soul, keep them, and it will be your fault if they go wrong; but do not—do not trifle with a desperate and irresponsible being; for the love I feel for you, Miriam, is a parched insanity that has drained the last drop of reason; I am giddily tottering upon the brink of a precipice, on one side which, lies the paradise of love, bounded by hope's horizon of bright future years, and on the other, an unfathomable abyss of destruction and despair. Mercy, mercy! Miriam! and do not push me in."

"Philip," said I, imprinting a kiss upon his burning forehead, "again I say you frighten me; you do indeed want some one to take care of you: I will be that one—here is my hand, and in it my heart; use it gently, for I tell you honestly, half what your mother endured would break it."

"Break it, Miriam, my own—my angel! if I break it it must be with such a weight of love as no one heart was ever yet called upon to bear!" and he folded me to his bosom, and for some seconds neither of us spoke. The sound of footsteps on the stairs made me start from him; in doing so, the very fragile chain that held poor Bloom's little dove, that I always wore in my bosom, caught in the pin of his neck-handkerchief and broke! I uttered a faint cry.

"What's the matter, love?"

"Oh, what a fatal omen!" said I, taking up the broken chain."

"For me, then, if you will be so superstitious; for see, the dove remains with you, like a sensible happy bird as it is, and the broken links with me."

"Oh, Philip," said I, suddenly, "how foolish we are, and how wrong I am; we have settled all this without ever remembering that dear Mrs. Vavasour, and Uncle Paulett, or poor papa, and your formidable Uncle Dingly, were in the world; or, in short, that any one was, but ourselves."

"Nor are there," said he, seating himself beside me, and again drawing me towards him; "we dont want any one else in the world; do we, Mirry? my own Mirry! my little wife!"

"But, Philip—"

"But Mirry—"

"No; but listen to me. You'll ask your mother first, wont you? and, kind as she is, she may not like it; for I have nothing. And then your terrible Uncle Dingly. Oh, I'm sure he'll never give his consent!"

"We don't want his consent."

"Oh, but dear Philip, you don't suppose that I'd be so selfish as to let you blight all your worldly prospects by marrying me without it?"

"Oh, no; I shan't do that."

"But how can you help it, if you marry me either without or against his consent? and from all I have always heard of his mercenary and worldly character, you'll have I'm certain to do one or the other."

Philip made no answer; but, putting his arm round my waist, and his lips close to my ear, he whispered—

"Miriam, my own Miriam, we will be privately married here, at St. George's, at eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

"No, Philip, we will *not*," said I, disengaging myself from him.

"But Mirry, dear Mirry, listen to reason."

"It is precisely to her that I am listening."

"Surely, you yourself were the first to say, that you would not let me risk my worldly prospects in marrying you."

"Nor will I."

"But, dearest love, as you most truly said, my Uncle Dingly is much too mercenary a beast to give his consent."

"Take care, I did not say *beast;* but *you* know him better than I do; and I should not like to marry into a family where there was even *one* beast, and only once removed from my husband, for I have terrible faith in blood; it seldom belies itself."

"Then you persist," said he gloomily, almost sullenly, "in risking my worldly interest with my uncle?"

"Far from it; I will not even risk what you seem to set no store by, but what is dearer to me even than your worldly prospects."

"What do you mean?"

"Your honour."

"My honour! how can that be compromised by secretly marrying the woman I love, to avoid an open rupture with a damnable uncle?"

"I am sorry that you cannot perceive how; that is, I am more than sorry that you should so completely separate the honour of one you would make your wife from your own. I should have thought that they ought to have been *one*."

"But, dearest Miriam, your honour cannot be compromised, either, by making any sacrifice for your husband."

"Softly, I know; that is the ONE article of man's creed. But you are not my husband yet; and since the world began, there are too many instances on record of men's terrible lack, not only of generosity,

but of gratitude and common justice, in being the very first to upbraid the slightest direlection from duty of which they themselves have been at once the cause and the effect; for it is so convenient to them to palliate all future wrong in themselves, by a scrupulously severe retrospective verdict upon the slightest wavering from the sternest path of duty in their wives. 'You deceived or disobliged your father, mother, or guardian for me; *ergo*, you would be quite capable of deceiving me; at all events, it suits me to say so,' is the noble-minded tone of marital logic; and knowing this, every woman is a fool who lets the sophistry of a lover's 'then you don't care for me,' entrap her into deviating one hair's breadth from the straight line, knowing, from the recorded experience of six thousand years, how seldom, if ever, men are true to them, women should at least be so to themselves; but what between the superabundance of silliness on the one side, and the large mass of women on the other, whom men have made as vicious and heartless as themselves, I fear it will be long—very long, before they are."

"Good heavens, Miriam! you don't think I could ever be such a dastardly wretch, as at any future time to upbraid you with deceiving the whole world, had you done so to prove your love for *me?*"

"No, I don't think you are *now;* and I'm sure *you* don't think you ever would be. But the very fear a woman feels at these clandestine engagements, is nature prophecying in her heart; and if she heed not, her present warning, when the future arrives, that heart may be a wilderness, and despair the only voice crying in it. You may think all this caution precocious in a girl of my age: but recollect, Philip, I have not been brought up by easy stages, like other girls, but cradled in a storm, as it were, from my earliest infancy. Look at the flowers of the field, or those of the garden; all nature teaches the same lesson: the leaves which the

sunbeam expands gradually and genially, the blast opens suddenly and rudely; and once opened, they must receive such torrents of light as heaven sends them. I do not—I cannot, like most girls, accept it in blind credence as a fact, that every man is my superior; but even were it so intellectually—which I have not yet found—I have little or no veneration for mere intellectual supremacy. Having been taught by precept, but still more by the only real teaching, that of example, to feel—nay to religiously believe, that one grain of moral worth in the scale of God's justice, and in utility to man, outweighs a whole mountain of mere intellect; though I am far from under-rating intellect, as I look upon it to be the sun of the moral world; but what is the use of the brightest and most ardent sun, but to engender pestilence and death, if it only shines upon barren plains or immuned masses? For the gem must first exist in the mine, and the fruit on the tree, before the great luminary can impart brilliancy to the one, or flavour to the other. Besides, I have heard all your mother's sad, sad history; and oh! there is a truer and deeper, if a more terrible, knowledge to be gained from the study of the incarnate realities of *one* broken heart, than from the simulachrum teaching of a thousand schools.

"Trust me, Philip, I know you better than you know yourself. Do not urge me to do that which, when you look back upon it, you will view in a very different light from that which the glow of your present feelings sheds upon it. Surely, to risk so much of my future peace for a momentary gratification to yourself, is purchasing it at too great a sacrifice of me."

He had been leaning on the mantel-piece, apparently listening to me, but I had no sooner ceased speaking, than he seized both my hands so violently that he hurt them; and flinging himself at my feet, said:

"Miriam, answer me one question; do you, or do you not love me?"

"Philip, you know that I do."

"I know no such thing; how should I know it?"

"If you do not believe me, there is no use in my repeating what I was, perhaps, foolish ever to have acknowledged," rejoined I, forcibly withdrawing my hands from his grasp.

"Pshaw! words — mere words! the most useless things on earth," he cried, breaking from me, and pacing up and down the room.

"I fear so," sighed I.

"Love!—not you—the woman that loves don't calculate; the woman that loves don't reason; the woman that loves don't use the word sacrifice, for she don't know what it means; the woman that loves don't hesitate. No, she consents to anything and everything her lover wishes."

"Then," said I coldly, almost haughtily, "at that rate, I certainly do not love,"

"Oh! now you can speak the plain, unvarnished truth; and coin your strong vacillations into insulting fiats," sneered he bitterly. "At all events," added he, seizing his hat, and hastily putting on his gloves, while his fingers trembled with passion, "I thank you, Miss Sedley, for your tardy candour; better late than never."

His mother's words rang in my ears, like a knell, "*never marry a man, the very nature of whose love for you, you perceive to be selfishness.*"

I covered my face with my hands, and leaning on the arm of the sofa, I burst into tears.

"Miriam, I am mad! but you have made me so. Only unsay those horrible words, that you do not love me, which are eating into my very soul like fire, and scathing my brain till I feel it cracking and crumbling into frenzy," cried he, returning from the door, and

flinging his hat upon the table, as he again knelt down, and tried to force my hands from before my face.

"Ah! Philip, it is *you* who do not love me; if you did, you would, at least, have some feeling for me—some respect for yourself."

"Forgive me, Miriam, my own Miriam! yes, mine! I may say mine; you *will* be mine—wont you?" said he, whispering the words into my ear, and emphasizing each, with a kiss.

I made no answer, for my heart felt as if it would break; what had become of all my fine theories, my mathematical rules for never loving where I could not esteem; to esteem violence, selfishness, and want of principle, was impossible; and it *was* unprincipled, cruelly unprincipled, to wish me, for the gratification of his own immediate feelings, to become an embodied falsehood, and not only to deceive all whom I dearly loved, but him whom I was at least bound to obey; to place me in a false and a compromising position. Surely a man of real honour and delicacy would have done everything to save me from any more of these equivocal trials, for had I not had enough of them already? No, it was out of all reason that I could approve, much less admire such conduct. And yet I loved him! oh, yes, I loved him! When the true faith of reason deserts the heart, it becomes superstitious, I suppose it was to be; for since the world was made, has not love been the grave of reason, and marriage its epitaph? making a pompous eulogium on it when it was too late!

The shades of evening were beginning to fall; for some minutes neither of us spoke; the tempest that had raged in his heart, and swept ruthlessly over mine, till it had beaten it down to the very earth, was spent, and both were hushed in that deep dreamy calm of love, which is the anodyne of its own fever, but which

we feel cannot last, and therefore dread even the faintest breath that may dissolve the spell. Philip was the first to break it:

"Plague take the hours," said he, lifting up his head, and looking towards the window; "why for once can't they stand still? I suppose I must go now, Miriam," cried he, straining me to his bosom, and not daring to utter the words out aloud. "For the last time I ask it; promise that you will be mine to-morrow morning at eight, or if you don't, you will never see me again—at least as your lover—for I will not, I cannot, go on in this way; having no ostensible right to prevent all the world loving you, if they like, for my Uncle Dingly may live these twenty years."

"And for the short space of twenty years," said I, "you would condemn me to a life of apparent shame, and real anguish. Oh! Philip! Philip! mend your own heart before you would break mine."

"Then you refuse?" said he, setting his teeth, and folding his arms.

"I do," said I, in a low, but firm voice, but I had not the courage to raise my eyes to his as I spoke; the next moment the door was slammed to, with a violence that shook the whole room, and made me rebound upon my seat. I looked up—he was gone! Mechanically I darted a step or two forward towards the door, with my arms out, as if I would have caught and brought him back; but taken in the springe of my own folly, I tottered back, sank down on the floor beside the sofa, and burst into an hysterical flood of tears. He had left his handkerchief upon the sofa: I buried my face in it, and then I understood why a dog always lies upon a glove, a handkerchief, or any other garment of its master's or mistress's. The fire had gone out, the ashes were desolately strewed about the grate, the small, dim, old, oil street-lamps were just lit, and their feeble flickering rays were reflected in pale phantom

shadows along the gloomy walls. Oh! when one is writhing in the concrete agonies of despair, one feels almost grateful to silent walls, and insentient things, for the decent seeming of their sympathetic desolation. But my tears soon ceased to flow, for after the first hot gush of agony in a great grief, comes that sudden winter of the heart, which freezes up all its fountains into a fictitious hardness, and enables it to bear for a time the greatest weight of misery, while all minor ones glide unfelt over its congealed surface. I don't know how long I had remained in this state of petrifaction, when I heard my father's bed-room door open. I started to my feet, and as the feeble attenuated rays of the street-lamp fell upon his white hair and pale face, it would not have required much imagination to have taken him for a messenger from the other world; but the last bell of the general-postman was pealing through the dingy street, and a phantom visitor would hardly have been so loudly and corporeally announced.

"Mirry, darling, are you there?" said he. I went over, and took his hand. "Are you alone, my child?"

"*Alone!* indeed, Father!"

CHAPTER XII.

For a whole week, I hoped to receive some tidings of Philip—if only one line of contrition for his injustice, and his selfishness—but none came; the second week the terrible conflicts of Love's fearful bane were beginning to yield to the antidotes of reason and reflection; it was evident he had no *real* love for me; and in this conviction it was that my radical cure was to be found; for, as in the physical world, where a poison grows, its antidote generally springs up near—so had Providence mercifully, in bestowing upon me a susceptibility to kindness, almost amounting to weakness, at the same time armed me with a contempt for, and resistance of injustice, and an incapability of caring for those who did not care for me; which, if not in itself amounting to firmness, at least made a most efficient substitute for it. After some insane out-gushings of despair and anguish at seeing this first, and so recently erected, idol, already shivered at life's very threshold, I began to turn round in the desolate and desecrated temple of my own heart, and to prostrate myself in the penitent spirit of submission to the inscrutable will of the only true God, who even when we offer up the incense of our gratitude through the blessings he has bestowed upon us, often removes them beyond our reach, as if to

make us feel that our bare, bleeding, ravaged heart, unbribed by a single ray of earthly hope, was the only sacrifice whose unleavened sincerity He was satisfied with. Oh! happy they, the quick of faith, who do not require too many judgments to convert them into his Apostles, but who can, like Paul, from their first terrible overthrow, leave their sins in the dust, and "Arise, and go to their Father!"

My whole life, as far as it had gone, had been unlike other lives: surrounded by false ties and spurious authority, for good as well as for evil—lavishing (with most just cause it is true) the warm, deep, venerating, love of filial affection—upon one who was *not* my Father—and giving him who *was* all indeed that I had to give: duty, and attention—the pale reflections of this glowing-sun. When all I clung to failed me, this deep conviction alone of being ill-fated, acted as a magnetic rock to misfortune; and already I felt sure that had I been a branch of ivy, and with more prudence than ever yet lurked in leaf or sage, had selected a sturdy oak, instead of a crumbling wall, round which to twine; the axe would have been laid to the oak the very next day after our partnership—while the crazy wall would have weathered, through long years, many a natural storm. What rivetted this notion in my mind was, that although the advantageous and disadvantageous circumstances attending Grace and me had hitherto been precisely the same,—yet what a different horizon the future seemed to gild for her; M. de Maillepré was all that the most devoted Love could dream—all that the most delicate conscience could exact of high and chivalric honour.

The untried wise, and the untemptedly virtuous, will tell us that conduct is fate, and so it is to a certain degree; but our real fate is a high mystery, quite independent of our conduct, the proof of which is, that to some these said *parcæ* are indulgent and benign

mothers, weaving for their web of life one fair even tissue, wherein the golden threads of pleasure are so closely blent with the silken warp of duty, that they are *one*, and for such to enjoy, is to obey; while to others, they are fierce step-mothers, turning their victims out in a storm, just where the cross roads of life meet, that of duty being filled with nettles, brambles, and sharp pointed stones, and that of inclination being fair and smooth at the onset, but with a dark whirlpool at the end of it, which must engulf all who travel by it. "Then choose the path of duty!" thunders the golden tissued moralist, from his easy chair. Good Sir, we hope to do so. But mercy, if not pity, when in our rugged path a moan escapes us, and we leave the ensanguined traces of our lacerated footsteps on the world.

I was sitting one cold grey morning, such as we often have in England towards the end of April, up in my room, "communing with my own heart," and trying to be still, when a very gentle knock came to the door; it was Nelly, who said:

"I beg your pardon, Miss, but don't you think the masther is slaping a long time?"

"You know he don't like being disturbed till he rings. But what o'clock is it?"

"A quarter to two, Miss."

"Then, indeed, it is time he was called."

Not without a sharp twinge of self-reproach, at having let two hours beyond the usual time of my going into my father's room elapse, did I now go down stairs, followed by Nelly. I knocked gently at his door; no answer. "May I come in, dear papa?" still no answer.

"You'd better go in, Miss," said Nelly, faintly; "or no, maybe its I that had better go fust."

"Good gracious! Nelly, how pale you look—like death!"

"Like enough, darlint; shure we must all die wancet. Stay here, there's a good child."

"Oh no!" said, I bursting into tears, "I see it all in your face. Why should I stay here if he's gone!"

"Hush!" said Nelly, softly opening the door. There was no mistaking the silence; there is but one such silence, that of Death! Where he is, the very air dies, too. Nelly walked on tiptoe to the window, and slowly and noiselessly opened a bit of the shutter. I stood by the bed-side, trembling. I could neither speak nor put aside the curtain. When Nelly did so, I said, with that self-delusion that we know to be a mockery, and yet cling to:

"Oh! Nelly, he is only asleep."

"He is, darlint," said Nelly, falling upon her knees, and clasping her hands in prayer, as she raised her streaming eyes to Heaven; "the best of slapes, sure, that knows neither bad dhrames nor sorrow at waking. Knale down, darlint, and thank God that his sowl's in glory! and dat it's both fader and moder you have now among the angels to look afther you; and you, dat was de best of good childer to him, tink of dat, alannah! it's laid up for you above, for sure wasn't dat de last thought he took to Heaven of you."

"Oh, no; no, Nelly; the worst. I did not love him as I ought. Two hours sooner I might, perhaps, have had his last blessing," said I, in a passion of tears, pressing my burning lips to his icy forehead.

"Oh, fie! Miss Miriam, to be saying what's not thrue at such a moment. Wasn't he always saying dat a better child never breathed de breath of life; and as for hish blessing, God rest hish sowl! don't you know dat he'sh gone to where blesshings ish plinty; which dare far from being in dis cowld dirty clod of a world; and for all he washn't a Catholic, more's de pity, yet de Lord forgive me, if Fader O'Toole shwore it on hish own breviary, dat belonged to Shaint Patrick, I cudn't belave dat de poor mashter wouldn't get to Heaven some how, if it's only on de echo of de Paters

and Aves I've said over him myself; and sure wancet dere, he can take his choiche of de blesshings, and it wud be odd indade if he didn't send you, and poor Miss Grace de very best."

Alas! alas! for our poor wavering wayward hearts, that never know how much they value anything till they lose it! I often think that the punishment of the most wicked after death will be to look back upon the time they have lost, and the evil they have committed, without the power of regaining the one, or atoning for the other; in short, a sort of spiritual catalepsy, wherein the torture of acute feeling is imbedded in the despond of an impossibility of action. As I now gazed upon the calm happy face of my poor father (for the Angel of Death in emancipating his spirit seemed to have annihilated those dark twins of earth, Sin and Sorrow, and to have embalmed the unconscious clay in eternal rest,) I felt all the love I *should* have had for him through life, but had not had; crowd in a mighty whirlpool round my heart till it was well nigh breaking—and what, perhaps, contributed to this, though I was unconscious of it at the time, was the tumultuous rushing of many dammed up griefs into this one great legitimate channel. With that refinement of self torture, which is the relentless discipline of affliction, I now recalled every kind word and look that he had ever given me, and indeed he had never given me any other. I also magnified my most trifling omissions towards him into the most deadly and unpardonable crimes, especially the two hours which I had lost in coming to him that morning. Oh! there was something horrible in the idea of his having been left to die alone. I almost fancied I was a parricide, and loudly accused myself of being such, as I frantically implored the forgiveness of his beatified spirit while I knelt beside its late but now deserted habitation!

Oh, yes; there I knelt, inscribing in the hot agony of a riven heart the universal epitaph of every earthly blessing—

"Too late found, too soon lost!"

Poor Nelly, who had all the considerate tact of real feeling, and therefore knew, that to attempt suddenly and clumsily, to check a violent outburst of grief, is only to augment it, allowed me for more than an hour, to give mine vent; and then gently, but forcibly raising my head from off my poor father's cold hand upon which it was leaning, she lifted me up and seated me on her lap, as if I had still been a child; and my face falling upon her shoulder, where its childish griefs had so often rested before, she said to me in a low voice, while patting my back as if hushing an infant to sleep:

"Hush! now my own good child, don't be afther troubling the poor masther's sowl in its glory! don't you remember, darlint, how Sur George, God bless him! whin you were a little ting, always had your beautiful New Years' Gifts laid on your pillow in the night that you might see them the fust thing in the morning, and wake up glad; well now shure its just the same thing wid our Heavenly Father, whin he takes a sowl in slape, he manes it as the greatest of all blessings—that it may wake in Heaven to iverlasting joy and gladness, wid sorrow a taste of this dirty world hanging about it, which it cudn't but have, shure if it was waking whin it left it. Besides, isn't there Sur George, yer rael father you may say, left? weirsthrew! what wud you have done if it had been him? whereas, the poor masther, God rest his sowl! is gone to where ivery blessing is in schtore for him; while here, barring yourself, sorrow a wun he had that I cud see, and Miss Mirry, darlint, theres a dale to do, and you are not the wun to turn your back upon what must and ought to

be done, aven if its stuck as full of spikes as a harrow, which indade for de matter of dat, most duties is in dis world.

"Fust, you'll have to write a line down to Brookshe's Cloob House, to tell Mishter Tom what has happened; for he must see to de funeral; and den I'm thinking though he is your cousin, and old enough to be your ancessther, to say nothing of his being ugly enough to purtect Vanus herself; yet it wudn't do for the likes of you, to be in a house alone wid a bachelor however ould and ugly; for you see its de ears dat sets de tongues wagging in dis world, and de eyes has nothing to do wid it; and even whin dey have, shure dere niver belaved aginst de ears and de tongue. It's mighty unlucky dat naither Sur George, nor Mrs. Vavasour, or aven Mrs. Marley, or Miss Paulett itself, shud be in it just now; for my place is no place to take you to aither, though av coorse I cud stow Jiffs away aisy enough. So Miss Mirry, darlint, you'll have to write to some of de quality to recave you, till Sur George, or Mrs. Vavasour, dat you do be expicting now ivery day arrive, and its glad dey ought to be to get you."

Nelly had touched the right chord. I saw the necessity of rousing myself. But who could I write to? I did not know enough of Lady Plantagenet; Mrs. and Miss Waltham were unfortunately at Hastings; and even Lady Paulett, disagreeable as it would have been to me to crave their hospitality, was out of town. Three guineas was all the money I possessed in the world; and I certainly would not have accepted, much less have asked, any from Tom Lutron; I would not even write to him, as Nelly told me to do, but told Maurice to seek him at his different haunts, and tell him. In the midst of my painful perplexity, I suddenly remembered that my cousin, Mrs. Penrose, lived in Upper Brook Street, and though I had never seen her, I thought that, after my poor father's volun-

tary restitution of her alienated property, she would not surely at such a time refuse to give his child a few days' shelter.

I sat down, and, as well as my tears would let me, I wrote her a short note, telling her what had happened, and making my request. With this Dowling was despatched, and Nelly, locking the bed-room door, and putting the key into her pocket, made me lie down on the sofa. I obeyed her tacitly in all things: it was the only proof I had it in my power to give her of my gratitude for her unwearying and efficient kindness. She sat at my feet, rubbing them; at length my sobs became more sudden, but less frequent, till, like the disciples, I slept for sorrow—I cannot tell how long; but I was roused by Maurice coming into the room, though he did so very gently, and laid the morning papers on the table.

"Well?" said I, starting up, and leaning on my elbow; this was all I could say; but he understood that I wanted to hear the result of his mission.

"Mr. Lutron was at none of the club-houses, Miss. They said at Watier's, that directly after the unfortunate affair had happened, he had gone out of town."

"What unfortunate affair?" said I, now completely rousing myself, and feeling a presentiment that the floodgates of misfortune once opened, there would be no bounds to its inroads.

"I don't exactly know, Miss," said Maurice, passing his hand over his eyes, as he hurried out of the room; "but they say it's all in the papers."

With a trembling hand I seized the uppermost one, which happened to be "The Morning Chronicle," and the first thing I saw, in large letters, was:

"AWFUL SUICIDE OF DINGLY VAVASOUR, ESQ.,
"OF MARMIONDALE, YORKSHIRE."

It was some seconds before I could see to read the

following paragraph in the paper I held so convulsively clenched in both my hands:

"Last night the whole neighbourhood of St. James's was thrown into consternation by the suicide of the above-named gentleman, so long known on the turf and in the fashionable world. What renders this awful event doubly terrible are the circumstances under which it was committed; for we regret to state that it took place in a hell in St. James's Street. It appears that for the last three months the deceased had been in the habit of winning, and also occasionally of losing large sums nightly, in this particular pandemonium, to Lord Y——, General G——, and the Honourable T—— L——; but that for the last week he had had an uninterrupted run of ill luck. About two o'clock this morning, he announced his intention of setting his fate literally upon a cast, and bartering his fine estate of Marmiondale, which has a rental of thirty-two thousand a year, for the comparatively paltry sum of one hundred thousand pounds. In justice to the Honourable T—— L——, with whom he was then playing, it must be stated that the latter declined these fearful odds—first, because he had not that sum, though it would have been easy to have raised it on the property had he won; and next, because, he said, he considered it a robbery.

"Lord Y——, however, who was supping at a table in the same room, was not so scrupulous, and said, 'I'll take the odds, and L——, as you are in the vein to-night, you shall throw for me.' Still, Mr. L—— remonstrated, when the deceased said, putting the dice-box into his hand, 'Dang it, Tom, if Lord Y—— likes to oblige his friends, why should you put a spoke in their wheel.' After a still further demur, the Honourable T—— L—— at length unfortunately consented, and threw sixes; Mr. Vavasour, throwing tray-deuce. 'Surely, my Lord,' cried Mr. L——, in great consternation, 'you'll give Vavasour another

chance?' 'By all means, if he likes,' asssented Lord Y——.

"'Not for the world,' deprecated Mr. Vavasour, coolly putting both his hands into his coat-pockets, and with the left, drawing forth a paper, which he laid on the table, while, with the right, before any one could see what he was about, or prevent him, he had seized a small, hair-trigger pistol, and, placing the muzzle in his mouth, discharged it. Lord Y——, who was carrying a glass of champagne to his lips, had the wine dashed over him, by the glass being completely filled with the unfortunate gentleman's brains, with which he was also bespattered.

"The contents of the paper, which had evidently been deliberately drawn up, were as follow: 'A little more, or a little less odium upon a man's character, when he is beyond the reach of feeling, or resenting it, is very immaterial. And open confession, they say, is good for the soul; so here goes for my soul, if I have one, and if not, *ex nihilo nihil fit.* If I win the hundred thousand pounds, I have proposed to myself to obtain, I shall start instanter for another hemisphere, and change my name. The mortgage on Marmiondale (one up to the very eyes of its uttermost value) having, after a long and ineffectual struggle on my part, been foreclosed the day before yesterday; and consequently not worth a song to whomsoever may win it. Whereas, that luckless individual's hundred thousand pounds will be of infinite use to me, should he lose them; but if not, why then I have only to end a life, which has long been almost as much burdened as Marmiondale.

"I am sorry for that poor boy, my nephew, Philip, as I screwed him so very tight upon the strength of his future heirship; and his mother, I really am sorry for her—not the less so for having hated her for the last twenty years, though I began by loving her, and had she listened to reason, I'd have joined forces with her against my brother: but she wouldn't and your

high-minded, virtuous, conscientious people, are damnably in the way of a clever enterprising family like ours; so the only way is to crush them, and that, I flatter myself I have done effectually;—ha! ha! and through her idol—her son, too; for I have taken good care in his education that he should only see, feel, hear, or believe what I chose; varnishing the whole with great apparent amiability and softness of manner—for the world is so moral that it never countenances any evil that has not a fair appearance: from long experience, I know that better than any one. All one's poisons must be administered in sugar—all one's daggers sheathed in velvet, which keeps them bright and sharp for using in the dark. The restraint of bolts and bars is revolting to the professed notions of English justice and independence; but cut off your victim's feet (only be sure you make them wear very long clothes to hide it), and then you may propitiate public opinion—that wonderful pivot of society! by leaving all the doors and windows of their prison-house wide open without any fear of the said victim's escaping you. And this, my dear nephew, is precisely the game I have been playing all my life, with you and your mother; and who pitied her? blamed you? or cursed me? *no one!*—nor wouldn't had I lived till doomsday, and retained the small house in Berkeley Square, and the large one at Marmiondale, to receive them in; for it is not so much charity as ostentation that covers a multitude of sins with us. Therefore, I really am, as I before said, sorry, my dear boy, that it is only in my power to bequeath you the former, which is a cold look out; and I fear your father's and my name, which we cannot alienate from you, will not give you much credit to trade upon; for though we, as rich men, might do anything or everything with impunity, upon you as a poor one, the odium of our deeds will descend with unpardonable severity.

"But to explain how you come not even to be heir

to several hundred thousand pounds worth of mortgages, *on peut être plus fin qu'un autre*, as Rochefoucault truly says, *mais non plus fin que tous les autres*; and it appears that my Phœnix of an attorney, Mr. Christopher Barnavelt, a sort of ambulating El Dorado, as I used to think him, for obtaining money for me when no one else would or could, was, in reality, playing old Belzoni's deep-laid scheme of revenge, to ruin the brother and son of the man who had seduced his wife; and that the real mortgagee he had got for me, instead of being simply one Mr. Joel Dalquharn, as I had imagined, was in reality Joel Dalquharn Belzoni, he having had a Scotch godfather it seems, who with £60,000, the foundation of his colossal fortune, had bequeathed him his own name of Dalquharn; and when this golden pippin of his deep revenge, which he irrigated with treacherous loans, was sufficiently ripe to drop from its feeble stem, he was of course there ready to receive it; and the day before yesterday, knowing that I had no means of meeting it, he foreclosed his mortgage, thereby making you and me beggars!

"As the only reparation in my power to make to you and your mother (for I think it ungentlemanlike to die without offering you some sort of satisfaction), I shall take every means to make this statement as public as possible, by leaving it on the table of the gambling-house in St. James's Street. I hope you and your mother will be able to live in some way or other, though I'm sure I don't know how. As to keep her more in the power of our family, her paltry annuity (not a jointure) was to cease with my life; however, one reads in novels and romances of widows living upon nothing, with either an only son or half-a-dozen children, if the author prefers it, and getting on very well; and I'm sure I hope she and you may be able to take out the same sort of patent. I know this document, as the lawyers will call it, will be copied

into every newspaper in the kingdom ; and I wish it to be so, that I may have the satisfaction of letting the world know of what a precious set of time-serving rascals it is composed, now that I no longer want it or fear it. These are the last words (to the authenticity of the writing of which, Christopher Barnavelt, Solicitor, of Hatton Garden, London, and my steward, James Haverford), can swear of me

"Dingly Churchill Vavasour,
"Late of Marmiondale,
"West Riding of Yorkshire."

"April 27th, 1819."

Philip a beggar ! Poor Philip ! and that was all I could say as the paper dropped from my hand—all I could think ; for, indeed, I was stunned, as it were, with this terrible influx of misery ! Mechanically I seized a pen, and mechanically I wrote. What ? to Philip ! to say I would now marry him on any terms ; and then I recollected the generous present I was making him of beggary to beggary, neither did I know where he was ; so I bitterly tore up what I had written. My brain felt on fire, but I did not cry. Oh, no ! I did not cry—I could not, it seemed as if the sea had rolled over my heart and suddenly frozen there, for it could neither contain nor overflow another drop. I paced the room, but I could not get away from myself, for the torture was in me. I looked wildly round the gloomy place as if I would force some tangible, incarnate hope out of its inanimate lumber ; but nothing changed, there was still death on one side and despair on every other ! I leant my burning forehead against the locked door of my dead father's room. I almost reproached him for his unkindness in leaving me. Oh, Death ! thou black, black slanderer ! that is always "separating chief friends," verily the valley of thy shadow is tesselated with broken hearts.

Poor Nelly followed me like *my* shadow, but she uttered no sound, but let me monopolize all that agony has of expression, and I was grateful to her for her forbearance. Oh! it is terrible, very terrible, to feel the withering of this sudden winter of the heart. I had risen that morning young, I was now old; for when affliction takes up the glass of Time, she shakes into minutes the sands of ages from her grasp.

"Nelly," cried I, turning to her and convulsively seizing her shoulders, "I *cannot bear it!*"

"It *is* a heavy burden for so young a heart, God help you! but shure, darlint, Sur George, and Miss Grace, and dat good kind Mrs. Vavasour will soon be here to help you to bear it, think of dat and take courage."

"Mrs. Vavasour!" she was a beggar, too. Oh! now I thought she must marry Uncle Paulett, and here at least was the refraction of a slight gleam of hope; but poor Philip! what was to become of him? left a beggar with the fearful curse of such an education as his had been, one of false pride, false aims, false ends, false feelings, or what comprises all other fallacies in one, that omnipotent and omnipresent bane, *a false position!* all this as I again paced the room was I weighing and analyzing; but only to extract beyond a doubt the poison without being able to find a single antidote, when the door opened, and Dowling brought me Mrs. Penrose's answer. I opened it and felt very sick as I read it; but the nausea of contempt is often salutary to an overburdened heart, and by turning its misery into another channel, relieves it of some of its "perilous stuff." Here is the note:

"Dear Miss Sedley,

"While Mr. Penrose and myself beg to offer you our sincere sympathy for your unfortunate position, he desires me to say how much he regrets that he

could not possibly take charge of any young person, even for the short space you mention; but you must trust to Providence, who will surely not desert you—with our united best wishes and Helen's love,

"Believe me to be most sincerely yours,

"MARY PENROSE.

"Upper Brook Street,
"April 29th, 1819."*

"Will I bring you your tings, Miss?" asked Nelly.

"What things?"

"Why I thought," said Nelly hesitatingly, and pointing to the note, "dat was for you to go to some friend's house."

"Friends!" repeated I bitterly, "there are no friends for the unfortunate, or at least they have no houses to receive them in—read that, Nelly, and then you'll see what friends and relations are made of."

"You know I can't, darlint," sighed Nelly, putting the proffered note aside, "but indade, if it's anything nasty, I'd rayder not know it, for de Lord above knows me heart is sore enough, and heavy enough, already."

"Oh, yes, Nelly! you must hear it, it will do you good, it has done me good, for I feel harder already;" and I re-read Mrs. Penrose's note to Nelly.

"Don't tell me, Miss, dat dat's Miss Scott Barry dat was, dat all owled Misthess Sizesmund's fine eshtate dat shud be yours now, was given back to so ginerously, so foolishly as it sames."

"The same, Nelly."

"No, by de mass! Miss, not de same, for every one used to say dat Mary Scott Barry was as purty, and

* This note is no fiction, but a fac-similed fact, which was addressed in answer to a question for temporary shelter, to a poor girl who had been left penniless, in consequence of the generosity of her parents, who had given up an alienated property to the writer, in the same manner, and under the same circumstances, that Godfrey Sedley is described as having done to his cousin.

as good, and as ginerous, and open-hearted a girl, as iver stepped."

"Ah, Nelly, we never know what people are till circumstances prove them; there is a test for metallic gold, and till tested, much Pinchbeck passes for such; but, depend upon it, adversity is the only test for the gold of character, either in ourselves or others. Forgive me, Nelly, for all my selfishness this morning, as if you had not enough to bear without bearing my burden, too; but I will exert myself, I will indeed."

"De Lord be good to me! listen to her, is it mad you want to dhrive me, Miss Miriam, alannah! shure, what would de likes of me be good for, if it wasn't to do what little I could for such as you?"

"Well, dear, good Nelly, I know the fountain of your kindness is never dry, and I have plenty of drains on it still; you see Mr. Lutron is out of town, so you, Nelly, will have to manage everything about my poor father's funeral, and I need not tell you that I'm sure Uncle Paulett will repay you everything."

"Whisht now, Miss Miriam, don't go and spoil all your goodness by spaking to me as if I was wan of dem cowld-hearted copper-minded English, dat has but wan thought on earth, and dat's money; shure whativer I have, wasn't it in de poor masther's house I got it; and doesn't what was his belong to his child by lawful right, widout making spaches about it?"

"I'll tell you what belongs to me, you do, thank God, my poor Nelly," said I, throwing my arms round her neck, and once more able to cry, which was a great relief.

"Ah! now Miss Miriam, darlint, you spake raison, and it's a pleasure to hear you; and now lie down, and try and get a little slape."

"Nelly," said I, throwing myself on the sofa to please her; "when it's all over, we'll go to Uncle Paulett's house; we shall at least be safe there."

"We will so, darlint, and I'm sorry I had not de sinse to think of dat at fust."

Here a gentle knock came to the door; Nelly went to open it; it was Monsieur de Maillepré.

"You know," said I putting out my hand to him—

"Yes, I know everything," he replied, pressing my hand affectionately between both of his, and then added: "I was here two hours ago; be assured I have seen to everything; and here is a little note I have brought you from Madame de ——. She wishes you to go there this evening—and will send for you by and bye; no one will see you, and you shall have rooms entirely to yourself."

I opened the note; it was from the French Ambassadress, whom I had never yet seen; it was the very quintessence of kindness—for there is no kindness so subtile as that of high breeding, upon the rare occasions that one is fortunate enough to meet with it. She began by regretting that our acquaintance should commence under such melancholy auspices; and begging I would pardon her want of ceremony in begging of me to come to the Embassy—but that from Monsieur de Maillepré's so constantly speaking of Grace and me, she almost imagined we were old acquaintances; and that I must consider her half a compatriot, and a little related, as Grace would be her cousin when married to M. de Maillepré."

I pressed his hand when I had finished reading this note, and said, "Thank you ten thousand times, for all your considerate, delicate kindness, for I know it is all your doing. Nevertheless, my deep gratitude is due to Madame de ——, and I leave you to express it to her; and at the same time beg of her not to doubt its sincerity if I decline her most kind hospitality;—but nothing could induce me to leave this house till my poor father's remains have done so, and then I will go to my Uncle Paulett's; but indeed, indeed, I am equally grateful to you, and to her, for your kindness."

"Well, dear Miriam," said he rising, "I cannot combat a resolution that does you credit, and which, therefore, I so much approve; every morning I shall come down to know if I can be of any use; but don't think it necessary to see me because I come; only remember that whatever you, or any one else wants, I, your *brother*, am the fittest person to apply to. I had a letter from Grace this morning, and she and Mrs. Vavasour, thank Heaven, will be here next week."

I shuddered.

"What is the matter?" asked he.

"Have you not heard," said I, pointing to the newspaper, "of the suicide of that bad man, Dingly Vavasour; and that poor thing, to crown all their villany to her, is now left perfectly destitute."

"Yes, yes, I know the whole of that tragedy," said he, tightly pressing his fingers on his eyes, "but between us all, we must contrive that she does not remain so."

"Oh! I know her; she is too proud to live on any one's charity."

"Charity! *fie donc, petite belle-sœur!* When friends help one another, do you call that charity? We must be great bunglers indeed if we let her think so; and it is a favourite principle of mine, that there is a *way of doing everything*, and that some persons might pay your bakers' bills, even out of charity! and wound your feelings less, than others would in inviting you to dinner to meet royalty."

"You are right," said I; "I have not lived all my life with dear Uncle Paulett, without being perfectly aware of the sort of 'white magic' that real benevolence possesses, of making apparently the most impossible things feasible, and of ennobling and refining what in clumsy hands would be the most coarse and humiliating."

I again cordially shook hands with him, and he

took his leave, saying he would send Nelly back to me. She had not returned many minutes, and was urging me to go up to my own room, as they were beginning to light the miserable little consumptive street lamps, when the drawing-room door opened, and Helen Penrose rushed in, and threw her arms round my neck, followed by a lady, who was crying bitterly, and whom I afterwards learnt was her mother. As soon as my little friend Helen had released me, she also threw herself upon my neck, and when her sobs would allow her to speak, she said:

"Oh! Miriam, do not think I could be such an utter wretch as to write you that cold-blooded, ungrateful, I may say inhuman, note, which you received from me an hour or two ago; but Mr. Penrose stood over me, and *made* me write it; and you know," added she, bitterly, "he is my lord and master!" But, thank heaven, I had a pair of diamond ear-rings not included in my *bill of sale*, that he knew nothing about, and those I have sold, and got this £100, if it can be of the slightest use to you. And oh! do, do, pray believe, that if I had *one* particle of free-will—which, unfortunately, I have not—my Grandmother Sigismund's Gloucestershire property should be restored to you, its lawful owner; as indeed, with his own fortune, which is £7000 a-year, Mr. Penrose does not want it; and it seems such a cruel, barbarous robbery, of you, who are now penniless, and have been so kind to my child and his. But then, to be sure, this would be only an act of simple justice, and those are of no account in this world. Whereas, only a month ago, he subscribed £5000 towards the building of a church, and all the papers have been ringing with puffs of his munificence, exalted piety, and Christian charity. Oh! Miriam! when you marry, take warning by me and never place yourself in a state of abject dependence on your master for every shilling; so as that your

duty to God has continually to be set aside, from a mean, monetary obedience to his will, however crooked, and however wrong."

"I am not likely ever to marry," said I; "and even if I should, having nothing, the settlements will be easily made."

"Not so, child. See that something is settled upon you, by the man whose slave you are to be for life; for it is positively immoral for any human being, with an immortal, and therefore accountable soul, to be in any other human being's power, so helplessly and hopelessly, as I am in Mr. Penrose's."

And here my poor cousin burst into a fresh paroxysm of tears.

"I am most truly grieved, my dear Mary," said I, "that you have so much cause for tears; but don't fret upon my account, as indeed you have done everything for me that I required; for to find you so kind, good, and generous, is to me at this bitter moment of accumulated trial and suffering, such an unspeakable relief—such a resuscitating comfort—that I feel I never can be sufficiently grateful to you for it; but your money, dear Mary, though much touched by your kindness, I do not want; for God has raised me up such good friends, that all my necessities have been anticipated and supplied."

"Ah! you will not take even that much from me," said she.

But knowing from experience how chilling and disheartening it is, when one has gone out of one's way, and made some sacrifice to serve people, to have both one's intention and one's exertion thrown back upon one, I put out my hand for the money, and said:

"You are not only kinder, but wiser than I am, my dear Mary, for I may, perhaps, have occasion for your generosity—so I will keep it, and see; and I assure you it will be a real pleasure to me to owe my deli-

verance from any dilemma to your considerate kindness;" but as I had my own reasons for wishing to find out where she had sold her ear-rings to serve me, I added: "Only I am so afraid you did not get the full value for your diamonds. Where did you sell them?"

"Oh! yes—I'm sure I did, for I sold them at Grey's, in Bond Street. I am so much obliged to you, dear Miriam, for taking these few beggarly pounds, because now I feel sure that you believe that I am incapable of robbing you as you have been robbed."

"Most assuredly, I do; but you give it rather too strong a name, my dear Mary, for a voluntary gift."

"Not a bit too strong, for there are certain gifts, which to accept is to commit a robbery. Dear me! it is almost dark, and we have only Tyrrel, my maid, with us, as I did not want Mr. Penrose to know where I was going; he would have been so angry."

"Oh, dear, darling *Mud!* do let me stay with Mirry to-night," said Helen, putting her arms round her mother's neck.

"My dear love, how can I? if your Papa should ask for you?"

"No, no, he won't," said Helen, arranging it all her own way; "don't you know he dines at Richmond to-day with the Yacht Club; and I'll be back very early to-morrow morning, long before I have to go in and wish him good morning at his breakfast."

"Well, dear, I suppose you must, if Miriam wishes it; for recollect, you have invited yourself," said Mrs. Penrose, who was evidently not in the habit of refusing this dear and only child anything.

"Me!" said I; "I shall indeed be only too glad to have my poor little puppy-dog back again, for I suppose Helen has told you that at school she was my dog?"

"Your pet dog, then; for don't you remember how

you used to feed me, and pet me? *I* do, if you don't."

"And I assure you, Miriam, that I do, too," said poor Mary Penrose, as she kissed, and wished me good-bye; adding, in a voice choked with emotion: "Although I am not allowed to prove it to you in the slightest manner."

"So then you rate my poor Helen here at nothing? and the diamond earrings?"

"Nothing, to what I would do were I let."

"Well, my dearest Mary, that is everything," said I, embracing her; for the intent is the only real part of any action; and even of acts prevented, the intention remains. By *that* only does God judge us, and by that only should his creatures be roused either into resentment or gratitude. So weighed by this true weight, and measured by this just and full measure, think, dear Mary, how much I owe you, and which I assure you I repay you in kind, that is, in all sincerity of esteem and affection."

"God bless, and thank you, dear Miriam, for saying so, at least," said poor Mary.

And so we parted. The unknown love of many years, thus unexpectedly dropped into our cup of mutual affliction, to soften its sharpness, and sweeten its bitterness; for so it is, that the sleepless mercy of our Heavenly Father, when our weary spirits are most faint, drops manna into our wilderness, and revives them with the angel-food of Love and Pity!

"Helen," said I, as soon as her mother was gone, "as you have again put yourself under the yoke, you must obey me as implicitly as you used to do at Concave House."

"With all my heart," said this affectionate little creature, hanging round my neck. "I'll go up the chimney, if you tell me do so."

"No; I won't be quite so unreasonable; but give

me your honour you'll do exactly as I want you to do?"

"Yes, upon my word and honour—anything, unless it's to go back home now, and that I really will not do, even to please you."

"No, it's not that, for I never punish myself, I leave that to others to do; so remember you have promised."

"Yes; anything, everything."

"Well, first of all were you with your Mamma when she sold her diamond ear-rings?"

"Yes; why?"

"Because I want you to take these two fifty pound notes back to Grey's and say, what is the exact truth, that a lady a cousin of your Mamma's, wishes very much to have those particular ear-rings, and I'll send Nelly and Maurice with you; and it's not five minutes' walk from here."

"Oh, but darling, poor Mamma will be so hurt and disappointed if you don't keep that money."

"Indeed, dear Helen, I would keep it with all my heart if I wanted it, but I don't; however, do not suppose that I am going to be so coarse and ungrateful as to give your dear kind mother back her ear-rings directly, on no account; I'll keep them for some months, and indeed if I find that I should be in want of further resources I'll even sell them again. There, will that satisfy you?"

"Not quite; but you've got me into the trap, so I suppose I must submit."

"Most decidedly you must," said I, and I rang for Nelly, and told her to get ready to accompany Miss Penrose with Maurice as far as Grey's the jewellers, in Bond Street; only come and undress me first, Nelly, for I'll go to bed, as I feel very ill."

"Dat's right, Miss, it's de best ting you can do."

Helen was not long before she returned with the

ear-rings; and goodness knows whatever little kindness I had had it in my power to show her at school, she more than repaid by her devoted and affectionate care of me for that miserable week; for her mother most kindly allowed her to pass every night with me, returning the next morning. The day after my poor father's death, Tom Lutron arrived; but with great kindness and good feeling he went to an hotel, and by Nelly's account, Dingly Vavasour's awful death seemed to have sobered and subdued him into quite a different person. On the day of my poor father's funeral, I got out of bed, and tottered to the window, where I remained riveted till I saw the coffin put into the hearse; the street I perceived was perfectly lined with carriages; for this mark of worldly respect, most kind and therefore most grateful under the circumstances, I felt we were indebted to the active amiability and delicate tact of Eugène de Maillepré.

When the mournful procession at length moved on, I was completely overpowered and fainted, for it was the only time in my life that I had seen the first and last of Death, and his prey was my own father!

* * * * *

When I regained my senses, I was in bed, with one hand held by Grace, and the other by my dear Uncle Paulett, not blind, as I had feared, but with the same dear, brilliant, kind, honest, and deeply intelligent eyes as ever. Oh! I was too happy! I hated myself for being so, in the midst of that very heart upon which my poor father's corse still weighed so heavily.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

About thirteen months had passed since my father's death, which had left me a penniless orphan. I was now a rich heiress; my dear uncle had surmounted his difficulties, and was again installed in his own house in Berkeley Square; the sole management of which he had committed to me, my aunts having, for the good of their health in particular, and decidedly for the good of the family in general, decided upon expatriating themselves, and taking up their abode at Palermo. Right glad was I that I *could* manage a house; and by contributing to his hourly and daily comfort, and well-being, return to that dear, kind, more than parent, a few crumbs of the bread which he had so lavishly cast upon the waters of my life. And although pecuniary economy, in the literal acceptation of the term, was now a thing of no moment to either of us, yet domestic economy, or the art of contributing to the moral and physical, *bien être* of those about us, is a talent equally necessary in a palace, or a prison.

The manner of our transition from poverty to wealth was this. About four months after the death of Dingly Vavasour, poor Belzoni followed his child to the grave; and one morning Mr. Christopher Barnavelt called upon my Uncle Paulett, in a hackney-coach, from which he alighted, with a tin deed-box in his hand, and

upon being ushered into my uncle's presence, told him that he was the bearer of good tidings to him "and the young lady," if the one he then saw was Miss Miriam Sedley; for that his client, Mr. Dalquharn Belzoni, recently deceased at Paris, had bequeathed to that young lady the fine, and now perfectly unincumbered property of Marmiondale, in the West Riding of Yorkshire; that to her sister he had only left £2,000 a-year, as she was about to make a good marriage. To Mrs. Vavasour, relict of the late Edward Hargrave Vavasour, £3,000 a-year, as he considered that she had been quite as much the victim of the Vavasour family as he had; but to this bequest there was a clause, that she should not, on any pretext whatsoever, alienate even £100 per annum as a separate allowance to her son, Philip Hargrave Vavasour; that if he chose to live with her, she was of course at liberty to supply his wants and wishes, as liberally as she pleased; also if he married, with her perfect approval, as well as consent, she was free to make what settlements she pleased upon him.

"And further," continued Mr. Barnavelt, who had by this time extricated the will from the tin box, and unfolded it, "To my dear and ever valued friend, General Sir George Warburton Paulett, Bart., G.C.B., K.C., and K.S,P., of Berkeley Square, in the parish of St. James's, London, and of the Priory near ——, Downshire, Ireland, who never cringed to me in my prosperity, but courted and consoled me in my supposed adversity, I bequeath £150,000 in the three per cent. consols; also whatever plate, wine, books, goods, chattels, or other personals I may die possessed of. I further constitute him my sole residuary legatee. Neither must I forget my friend Sir Joseph Paulett, K.G.H., better known during the Peninsular war as Don José Paulett. To him (as a sense of my gratitude for his unceasing attentions to me during

the zenith of my prosperity at Cairo, and the advice he was good enough on all occasions to give me under my supposed adversity), I bequeath my large folio edition of 'Debrett's Peerage,' in which he will find some royal, and many noble, autographs; and as I know how fond he is of great names, I hope he will duly appreciate this bequest; the more so, that its very nature will enable him to bilk the legacy duty, which I know will be a comfort to him; for notwithstanding his ultra-loyalty and profound admiration for all existing institutions, it has often surprised me that he should be so fond of indulging in the old-womanly solace of smuggling, and other revenue cheating gymnastics."

"God bless my soul! and is poor Belzoni dead? I was afraid he was not long for this world, when I saw him at Paris. Well! there is the last link of the Abercrombie Egyptian chain gone. Poor fellow! poor fellow!" and my uncle shed a few as genuine tears to the memory of his old friend, as if he had become sole heir to the folio edition of "Debrett," and Sir Joseph Paulett had been the owner of the £150,000 three per cent. consols.

Mr. Barnavelt, after congratulating us, wished to know if he might not announce our accession of fortune in the papers?

"On no account," said my uncle and I, in the same breath; "for," added I, "I have a very particular reason for not wishing to have it made public."

Mr. Barnavelt acquiesced with a bow; and after expressing a hope (to which I acceded) that he might continue to have the management of the Marmiondale property, took his departure. My uncle for some seconds continued leaning on the mantel-piece in a melancholy reverie, and I was in a sort of happy perplexity, big with undigested plans, but for the first time in my life, I was perplexed in the midst of perfect

security; and the repose was so novel and delightful, that I wished to prolong it. At length my uncle broke the silence, by again exclaiming "Poor Belzoni!" as he sank down into an easy chair beside the fire; and then he said, looking at me with one of his dear, kind, melancholy smiles:

"And so my Mirry is now a great heiress; but if she's the same girl I used to know of that name, I don't think she'll keep all she's got, but divide it with that poor boy."

"I'll keep every shilling of it!" cried I, almost fiercely.

My uncle stared, stopped dead short in the act of taking a pinch of snuff, and said:

"Good heavens! is it possible, so soon!"

"Yes, dear uncle, everything is possible," said I, seating myself on his knee, and throwing my arms round his neck, while with many kisses, and hiding my face against his, I told him all that had passed between me and Philip Vavasour, and of the plan I had in my head about him, which I was dying to communicate to his mother.

"Ah! *à la bonne heure!*" cried my uncle, drawing a long breath as he put out his hand to me. "I thought my Mirry could not but turn out an honest fellow at last, no matter how many acres she was clogged with!" and so saying, he rang the bell for his hat and gloves, and we walked together to Mrs. Vavasour's, whom my uncle and Monsieur de Maillepré had contrived, some months before, to persuade that the mortgagee of Marmiondale had been induced generously to continue her annuity on the property during her life; and she, never having been troubled with *l'embarras des richesses*, easily believed whatever they chose to tell her on the subject; and they were so accustomed to those sort of pious frauds, that I think they would have had the art to make black appear

white to serve a fellow-creature as so many possess the same subtle art to injure, and to betray, their neighbours.

When we reached Mrs. Vavasour's, we found Mr. Barnavelt at the door, he having first returned to Holborn for some papers he had forgotten. My uncle asked him if he would have the goodness to postpone his interview with Mrs. Vavasour till the next day, or come a couple of hours later on that one, as we had very particular business with her then. He said, certainly, and that he would return at the end of two hours, as he had one or two calls to make in the neighbourhood.

When we told her that Belzoni had left her £2,000, but that he had left nothing to Philip, she burst into tears, and said:

"Poor Philip! what *will he do?*" And then added: "And who has he left Marmiondale to?"

Then "I spake," and told her, as I had just before told my uncle, all that had passed between me and Philip. "But," concluded I, "I have no fancy for being married for my money, any more than I had for being married clandestinely without it; nor, much as I *could* love Philip, would anything induce me to marry him till certain false points in his character are thoroughly rooted out; and I have great faith that a few months in the school of Nature, that is, in his proper position with, and towards you, will be able to uproot the weeds of years, however obstinate and luxuriant: for this reason, I will not, on any account, that he be made acquainted with my accession of fortune; and if at the end of a sufficient probation I find that he loves you as he ought, and that without the yearnings of selfishness, or the chafings of pride, he is content to be dependant on you, and that he continues to love me, still supposing me to be poor, and is willing to work diligently at some honourable profes-

sion in order to support me, and has your sanction for making me his wife, I shall then gladly marry him; but if, on the other hand, all the love he has professed and thought he had for me was merely a passing fancy, but that he has gained and improved in every other way, why then I will restore to him his property of Marmiondale intact, for you know," concluded I, as the tears filled my eyes at the remembrance of my poor father, 'as the Irishman said of his wooden leg, *it runs in the blood*' of our family not to retain unjustly alienated estates, and I hope I shall not be the first to degenerate."

Mrs. Vavasour cried, and embraced me several times, and then said—

"No, my dear Miriam, that would not be fair, for Marmiondale is lawfully yours."

"Lawfully, yes; but justly, no; and you are aware they are but too often very different things."

"My dear child, you have made me so happy by telling me of your engagement to Philip."

"Softly, my dear Mrs. Vavasour; no engagement; the whole thing is in abeyance; and moreover depending upon all the "ifs" and "buts," and "may or may never bes," that I have just explained to you."

"Oh, then it is certain," exclaimed Mrs. Vavasour; "for I am very sure Philip cannot but love you deeply and sincerely, and all the rest will follow; for a real affection for a worthy object is like the *bise*-wind in a sultry climate, it purifies, and restores a healthy tone to all around."

"But, Mirry," said my Uncle, "you must not be too hard upon the poor boy, and confound an honourable desire of rendering himself independent by seeking a profession with an impatience of his mother's control, or a proud sullenness under his dependent state."

"I think, Mr. Solon," said I, taking his dear face in both my hands, and kissing his fine, high, generous fore-

head, "that you may trust to my *superior wisdom* to discriminate between the two."

From that time I neither sought nor avoided Philip Vavasour; at first he rather avoided me, but I liked him all the better for that. He thought we were both beggars, and it showed an effort to do right. His mother told me, that he had had one or two sharp struggles with his false pride, at his utterly dependant position upon the parent whom all his life he had been *made* to despise and neglect; but she thought, and I thought, that these were but the crisis or turn in the constitution of his mind; gradually he no longer absented himself when I passed the evening at his mother's, and though the word or the subject of love never passed his lips, I could *feel* (for one always does feel it much more than one perceives it) that he now really did love me; the dross in those hot ebullitions in Maddox Street had risen to the surface, and boiled over; the pure ore had now formed, and I, like a greedy alchymist, watched its consolidating process. He never would sing with me, always pretending he was hoarse, or that he had no voice; nor was I sorry for this either, for anything like diffidence or mistrust of himself was to me as an additional seal set upon the truth of his regard for me; and, with many a reluctant sigh, at the end of ten months he began to urge my Uncle to fulfil his promise of getting him a diplomatic appointment; but, as he himself said, a poor devil of an unpaid *attaché* was a drear look out through the vista of many years.

But what made me happier than all else was, that though many erroneous notions had been sown in his education, there was evidently nothing false nor hollow in the substratum of his character; for at first he had been almost distant to his mother, least it should be thought that interest or necessity, (that strongest of all interests!) had wrought the change in him; but

when once he began really and truly to love her, he found out that she was not a person one could love by halves, he then gave way to the feeling honestly, without either the affectation of reserve, or the still worse affectation of display; and in this same genuine spirit he now began to urge my uncle to procure him some employment, although his affection for his mother might have furnished him with a legitimate, and unquestionable pretext for remaining quietly and inertly where he was. Meanwhile, my uncle, all in pretending to busy himself in getting him an *attaché*-ship, had adopted the Emperor Joseph the Second's motto of "*Festina lente*," which did not, however, prevent poor Mrs. Vavasour from becoming very impatient.

"Dear me," said she to me one day, "how tiresome you both are: I see that Philip's love for you, is eating his very life away, and I know that you love him, and yet there you both are, playing with your happiness till you will destroy it; and I know the end of it will be, that he'll go abroad and die of a broken heart."

"Not a bit of it," said I, laughing; "for in the first place, men *don't* die of broken hearts, the malady being contrary to masculine organization: and in the next place, sooner than he should go abroad, without a wife to take care of him, I'll do by him in particular as my friend Miss Dickens, (I beg her pardon, Mrs. Algernon Pipeclay,) used to advise me to do by men in general, that is, I'll give him encouragement, and if that's not sufficient, why really I don't see why a *British female! of my fortune!* should not in words, propose for the husband she woos."

It was a bright May morning, some days after this conversation, that I was sitting alone in the library, Mademoiselle de Guilleragues, who had come to England for Grace's wedding, having gone to Grey's with my uncle, to hurry the *parure* of brilliants, and opals, that he was to put in her *trousseau*, as the marriage

was to take place in a fortnight; when the door opened, and Philip was announced. The event was an unusual one; for he generally took care not to come in, when they said my uncle was out. I took up a pocket-handkerchief, I was embroidering for Mademoiselle de Guilleragues *pour me donner une contenance,* but laid it down to shake hands with him.

"I have brought you," said he, with a slight hesitation of manner, "some lilies of the valley."

"I prefer moss-roses," said I, laying them down; "do you remember two you once gave me long ago?"

"Do you still remember those?" he said, blushing as deeply as I ought to have done, but did not.

"I never forget anything," replied I, pragmatically resuming my work, and plying my needle assiduously; "it would not do, you know, for a person to have a bad memory who piques themselves upon being the most notable housekeeper in England, at least among '*British females!*' of my class."

He made no reply; and there was a pause of a few moments, which he employed in pulling the lilies of the valley he had brought me to pieces.

"Don't," said I, quietly rescuing the survivors from his persecutions; "for though I *prefer* moss-rose buds, these are very pretty," and I put them into my bosom.

"Miriam," said he, without however, taking my hand, or falling at my feet, but advancing his chair opposite to mine, till he nearly touched me, while he held his hat in both his hands, and looked in my face, I keeping my eyes the while steadily upon my work, "I fear you will now think me more selfish than ever, but I cannot leave the country, which Sir George gives me hopes of soon doing, without unburdening my heart, and telling you that I have never, for one moment, ceased to love you—and—and that if you

still had the slightest remnant of regard for me which, I fear, you have not; and could be content to climb the hill of life, which poverty always makes more steep as a poor man's wife, oh! with what a light heart I would toil! and how I should even rejoice at having lost Marmiondale! as I could not lay one particle of your kindness to me, to its account. And yet, indeed, it would not be such a sacrifice to you, as it would be to most girls, to marry a man without fortune; for I have seen you under all circumstances, and I never knew any one who so well understood how to neutralize—nay, I might almost say, to embellish poverty; for, in that dingy lodging in Maddox Street, which would have vulgarized, and distorted any one else, still your *entourage* was perfectly that of a gentlewoman: for instead of its sinking you, you raised it.

"I have since seen you in affluence, but wealth has also its vulgarity, that of show; but still with the same happy art you also avoid that, and invest luxury with ease, which is to it what grace is to beauty—its better part—its soul, or voice of light, animating yet subduing the material mass. In short, I know not, Miriam, whether you would most shine as a queen or a peasant's wife; as the former, I know you would be 'princessly' in manner and princely in deed; but as the latter, I feel you would be peerless. Is it any wonder, then, that I should be selfish enough to wish to drag you from that bright galaxy of which you are the cynosure, down to my own humble orbit. I am sure my mother loves you so well, that she would make the most liberal settlements on you in her power; but still, during her life time, (and may it be long), we should have to experience many privations—that is, to have many ungratified wishes; yet with all this, I feel that I am more worthy of you, or rather less unworthy of you, than I was when I fancied myself the heir to thirty-two thousand a-year; for one pure,

unadulterated draught from the well of Truth, is more invigorating to the mind, and bestows a deeper knowledge, than all that can be derived from the sophisticated Pierian spring of scholastic routine, or the conventional Hippocrene of the world; but still I fear, Miriam, *dear* Miriam! that you will say that all my love is selfishness—in short, that I am very, very selfish?"

"No, Philip!"

"Oh! thank you for calling me Philip again," interrupted he.

"I do not think you selfish now," resumed I, leaning back in my chair, letting my work fall on my lap, and joining the tips of the fingers of both hands together, so as to leave an archway between the palms, while I continued in a sort of *nonchalante*, self-sufficient voice, much resembling that in which men talk of what they would choose "*my wife!* to be, to say, and to do." "No, I do not think you the least selfish; but there are certain things that I should deem it necessary for *my!* husband to have. First, though no great admirer of Parliament and 'Parliament men,' under our present system, still I should choose my husband to possess the means of standing for his county, if he pleased; then I should like him, as much on my own account as on his, to have a yacht; and I should detest marrying a man who had no love for, or appreciation of the arts; and my fancy would be to encourage modern art, and canvass, and marble, to say nothing of base metals, are rather expensive, when properly cultivated. Then for myself, individually, I would rather do without my dinner than my opera box; moreover, I should require at least two thousand a-year to be settled upon me for my *menus plaisirs*, for I should by no means choose to be like poor Mary Penrose, totally unable to help a relation or even a stranger, whatever their distress might be, without the

sub rosâ sacrifice of my diamond ear-rings or some other gaud, for I hate underhand proceedings even in a righteous cause; and to be honest, one must be independent."

"Good God, Miriam!" said Philip, looking very pale, as soon as I had talked myself out of breath; "surely you are jesting! but it is a cruel jest, seeing that I can give you none of these things."

"Yes, you can, if you please."

"How, in heaven's name?"

"By marrying me," said I rising and putting my hand into his. He looked at me with parted lips and distended eyes, as if mutely asking which was the maniac, he or I? I then put up my hands joined together as in prayer, and looking piteously in his face, said, with a little childish moan—

"Pease, good Master Philip, will oo marry poor itty me?"

He caught me in his arms, and it was some minutes before he would listen to the explanation I had to give him of poor Belzoni's munificent bequest to me. When I had finished, a slight shade passed over his face, and he sighed deeply. I trembled, lest it should be his old familiar—pride, returned to alloy our gold.

"Philip," said I, "why do you sigh?"

"It is very glorious!—very like a fairy tale," he replied; "yet, my own—own dear Mirry, I almost wish that we were not so rich."

"Not that *I* was not so rich," probed I, raising my head from his shoulder; and holding up my finger menacingly at him, "you are quite sure, naughty boy, that it is not *that?*"

"Oh quite, quite sure. My sole comfort is, that it is *yours*, and not mine; but, dearest," whispered he, "with so much love we did not want so much money, did we?"

"You did not always think so—when marrying me

would have made you risk the loss of Marmiondale, and—"

"Oh! be merciful, and don't remind me of my former self," cried he, putting one hand across my mouth, while he clenched the other, and added in a sort of frenzy, "when I think of the selfish, sordid wretch I was, it is not even anger or contempt that I feel against myself, but it is positive fury!"

"So much the better; do you remember what Cicero says of Ajax? '*Semper Ajax fortis, fortissimus tamen in furore. Ipsæ res verba rapiunt,*' and depend upon it, we are never so truly brave as when we feel a holy fury against all that is wrong, vicious, or degrading, whether in ourselves or others; for it is only from the hot ashes of the funeral pyre of evil, that the Phœnix Good ever rises.

The expedition of the lawyers did not quite keep pace with our wishes; but Monsieur de Maillepré kindly deferred his already-so-long delayed marriage another fortnight, so as that on that day month Grace and I might be married at the same time. The double weddings were very brilliant, and the day before, Nelly had come, with clasped hands and downcast eyes, to say she had a request to make me; but that raelly it was so beyand all raison, that she scarcely knew how to make it.

"My dear Nelly," said I, "there is no request you could make that I should think unreasonable; but even if I did, it should be quite as readily granted."

"God bless you, Miss; shure I know it, when you've had the goodness to give me a bonnet and dress fit for a quane to-morrow; and above all, to shend Misthress Marlowe in an oder carge, and let me go in de rumble of yours, as if I wash your own maid, and fit to discoorse wid de best of dem; and it's for dat raison dat I do be loath to encroach upon your goodness; but de bouldness and consate of dat Dermot bangs de world,

and not only sticks to him like his shadow, but like it sames to lengthen as hish days gits on; and now—wud you blave it?—noting will do him but dat he shud have your lave to take de lade of all de futmin, and open de carge dure for you when we do be setting off, after de wedding to-morrow."

"With all my heart," said I, laughing; "and pray give him this ten-pound note from me, Nelly, that he may buy gloves for the occasion."

At the breakfast we had, of course, nearly the whole of the *Corps Diplomatique;* and I have seldom seen a handsomer or a happier pair than Grace and M. de Maillepré. The Pauletts were all there, except Lady Mountflummery, who pleaded sudden indisposition. The Duchess of Clapperclaw had also honoured us with her company, looking even more splendid and voluminous than usual; and little Lord Catagraph, who was much grown, looked in his blue jacket and white trousers, as he stood by her side, like a narrow ribbon-marker in a large book. Helen, my little friend Jessey Fane (who was to sail in another month for India), and Ladies Lucy and Fanny Farnham were my bridesmaids —and in giving poor Mary Penrose a parting *souvenir* I also, with a long explanatory letter of gratitude, put into her hand the diamond earrings she had so kindly deprived herself of for me. Philip was radiant; never had I seen him look so handsome, for no shadow from within now darkened his beauty.

The Walthams and Dapperwitts were the gayest of the gay, but poor Madmoiselle de Guilleragues was out of one flood of tears into another, with a sort of nervous copyright anxiety about our every movement, declaring that she had not seen any such lovely, graceful, brides since the marriage of *La pauvre Dauphine!*

"Ma chère Demoiselle!" said Sir Joseph Paulett, "the simile is not a happy one, for the bridegrooms might have no fancy for resembling Louis Seize!"

"Cependant," cried M. de Maillepré, "Vavasour, et moi nous sommes logés à la même enseigne, car il y a bien de quoi perdre la tête!"

With this gallant retort courteous to Don Jóse's somewhat malicious speech, we rose from table, and as Philip and I went to take leave of our mother and uncle I thought, as they were standing on each side of a small table, like the two separated but not disunited trees on the seal, with the torrent rushing between them—

"What a pity!" and what I thought I uttered aloud.

"No," said Mrs. Vavasour, as she folded us both in her arms; "for then our children could not have been united."

"No," echoed my dear uncle, as his tears fell upon my cheek, "for had I had two such daughters, I should have been too selfish an old fellow ever to have given them away."

The servants who lined the hall had strewed it knee-deep with flowers, and Jeffs, with a favour as large as a shield, stepped out of the ranks to present me with a rare bouquet of that beautiful purple, *flor de queresmo*, that I had never seen but in poor Belzoni's lonely sea-girt turret, at ——, and being surrounded by a coronal of white jessamine, it was really lovely. Nelly was installed in the rumble, with her veil down, to conceal the nationality of her face, and was leaning back as carelessly, and almost with as much dignity, as if she had been hatched a real London lady's-maid. I knew that she had been for the last four and twenty hours almost pounding Dermot into a state of quiescence, and telling him to be sure and kape his eyes steady to wan point, and his hands and arms to himself, as if he was made of card-board and buckram like the oder futmin, and not be swilling about like a pail too full of water; and so well had he obeyed her injunctions, that he now stood like a ramrod by the carriage door, in a new livery of

my Uncle Paulett's, his hair powdered, and a huge favor all running to seed over one side of his coat. However, *chassez le naturel, il revient au galop ;* and, as I was getting into the carriage, in order to keep back the invading by-standers, he roared out in the voice of a Stentor, "Stand back, ye vagabones, bad manners to you!"

"Pray don't, Dermot," remonstrated I; "for Heaven only knows, that bad manners are our national curse already."

THE END.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

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3 0112 049757013